

# Welcome



## Slow Boat To Golfing Stagnation

I attended the annual R&A Press Day held each year at the Open venue and much of the conference revolved around what is becoming increasingly regarded as golf's biggest problem – slow play.

Gone are the days when you can zip around a course on a Saturday morning with a couple of friends in three hours and be home in time for family duties before lunch. Now, best to set aside five hours. Oh and buy one of those golf bags with a drink holder and a cool pocket for much needed supplies... and make sure you have some money to buy a snack at the half way house. You don't want to go weak with hunger while you're out there.

It's putting people off the game and that's bad news because the more people who decide that golf is great, but too time consuming to play regularly, the fewer people we have joining clubs and that's solid income disappearing for golf clubs.

For a pay and play course the slow play disease can be even more startling. For example, if a course loses 10 tee times a day because play is backed up, and remember that can be fewer than one tee time an hour in the summer season, the costs can be staggering. Take it as £25 a green fee, it works out at £100 a tee time; £1,000 a day; £7,000 a week.

That works out at £364,000 a year! All because someone didn't watch where their ball landed in the rough; parked their cart on the wrong side of the green; stubbornly maintained the laborious pre-shot routine they'd copied from JB Holmes or thought the plumb bobbing method for reading greens actually worked.

### What to do?

The R&A actually feels that the real slow coaches are the top amateurs, who have been coached to take their time and who often, would you believe, have to speed up when they joined the pro ranks. But let's face it there are more tortoises on the main Tours than hares and the odd fine doesn't spoil the day of many millionaire players. Shot penalties are a must because a player will never know when even a single shot would help him make a cut, or even win a tournament. What price can you place on that?

Another explanation for longer rounds is that we're all walking further. Tees have been pushed back; walks between green and tee seem to have grown - all because we're hitting the ball further. Let's face it even those of us who are getting older are hitting it further!

Knock 10% off the distance a ball travels and, by definition, 10% could be knocked off the length of a course without effecting scoring and we could end up walking/playing 600 yards less each round. That in itself could knock half an hour off a round.

Will it happen? Your guess is as good as mine but one thing is sure. Something has to be done or the game will continue down the slow road to stagnation.

Scott MacCallum  
Editor

## LIKE A PHOENIX FROM THE ASHES

In June 2007, Muswell Hill Golf Club was left devastated after a fire broke out in the club's machinery shed.

With the building housing a diesel tank recently topped up with some 5,000 litres of fuel as well as chemicals including fertiliser, the force of the inferno consumed the club and lit up the London skyline. It took six fire engines and 50 firefighters to bring the blaze – believed to have been started deliberately – under control.

Fast-forward one year, however, and the club has risen like a phoenix from the ashes. Arnid demoralised staff walk-outs, Matt Plested walked in as the club's new course manager and set about rebuilding the club and restoring staff confidence. One of his first tasks was replacing the £300,000-worth of grounds maintenance kit destroyed by the fire.

"The first thing I did was order new Toro kit," Matt recalls. Things are looking up now – we have an enthusiastic new greenkeeping team, the right machinery for the job and an excellent dealer in AT Oliver. It's an exciting time."



## PRESENTATION DINNER

A presentation dinner was held at Ratho Park Golf Club on April 4. This was to honour the Club Professional, Alan Pate and Head Greenkeeper, Tom Murray. They both have clocked up 30 plus years service.



Left to right Alan and Susan Pate, Pat and Tom Murray

## NEIL THOMAS MEMORIAL GOLF DAY

The BIGGA Golf Day is to be held again on June 30 at Aldwark Manor with profits going to the Child Heart Surgery Fund in Leeds. The day will be very informal, giving BIGGA the opportunity to promote a strong relationship between greenkeeper and trade members, while at the same time enabling everyone to enjoy a competitive, yet friendly, game of golf. The programme for the day will follow the successful format of previous years:

- Bacon sandwich, tea or coffee on arrival
- Tee times from 10.00am to 2.00pm
- Teams of four entered in competition over 18 holes, best 2 count on each hole
- Ploughman's Lunch
- Halfway House refreshments
- Buffet Meal
- Team prizes and longest drive individual prize

The entry fee per team is £250 + VAT. If you would like to participate please contact Sandra Raper on: 01347 833800 or: [sandra@bigga.co.uk](mailto:sandra@bigga.co.uk)

## GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS THREAT FROM ALIEN INVADERS

Visitors to the BBC's Garden Design Event in Norwich were greeted by the sight of a giant spaceship, which featured on the 'Alien Invaders' garden by British Wild Flower Plants (BWFPs).

Designed by the company's marketing manager Ian Forster, and situated at the entrance of The Forum, where the free, two day event was held, The Alien Invaders garden was conceived to highlight the threat of invasive foreign species, which according to BWFPs are invading our countryside. "People should be aware that plants like Japanese Knotweed and Pond Weed from Australia are threatening our own natural wild flower population and invading our ponds and waterways," says Forster. "We see ourselves as fighting the aliens and creating this garden gave us the ideal opportunity to warn people of this threat and encourage them to plant British wild flowers."

The BBC's Garden Design Event, now in its fifth year is organised by BBC Voices, the network's community wing, in conjunction with Radio Norfolk and BBC East. The brainchild of senior broadcast journalist Gary Standley it is the only regional event of its kind to be staged in a city centre, offering a free garden design service to shoppers, supplied by local horticultural students.

## SIR IAN BOTHAM LAUNCHES POWERPLAY GOLF BRITISH CHAMPIONSHIP

Cricket hero, Sir Ian Botham, recently launched the first PowerPlay Golf British Championship - a competition to find the nation's best exponent of the new game described as 'Twenty20 cricket for golf'.

More than 2,500 golf clubs in Britain have been invited to take part in the championship, which is endorsed by Botham and former football star, Les Ferdinand, and will culminate in a grand final at The Belfry this autumn.

Any golf club can stage a qualifying event, with its winner going through to play in one of nine regional finals. The top three golfers from each of those will fight to become the first ever PowerPlay Golf British Champion on the Belfry's famous Brabazon Course on October 14-15.

## BIGGA SOUTH WEST AND SOUTH WALES REGION GOLF MANAGEMENT COMPETITIONS 2008

This year's Golf Management Competitions for the South West and South Wales Region will take place at the following venues: South Coast Section - Petersfield Golf Club on Friday, June 27; South Wales Section - Pyle and Kenfig Golf Club on Thursday, July 10; South West Section - Chipping Sodbury Golf Club on Wednesday, July 30.

This event is a team competition for amateurs only. Teams should comprise of four players one of which must be a Greenkeeper, the other players being either the Club Secretary, Captain, Chairman or any member of the Management or Club Committee.

The Scotts Company (UK) Limited is once again sponsoring the prizes for each individual winning team member for first, second and third places. The winning team's club this year will receive an AccuPro 2000 Spreader with a RRP of £487.48 plus VAT. The region would like to thank both The Scotts Company UK Ltd for sponsoring this event and the clubs for their support in agreeing to host the day.

Entry forms will be sent to each club in the region and any enquiries regarding these days can be made by contacting Jane Jones, BIGGA Regional Administrator on: 01454 270850 or: 07841948110.

## NEW MANAGER

Phil Gates, MG, 38, is the new Course Manager at St Ives Golf Club and is busy getting the course ready for the grand opening next year.

The basic course is only a few months away from completion and work on the clubhouse is expected to start in the summer, but it will take until next summer for the grass on the fairways and greens to grow in full ready-for-use.

The course, due to open on June 1, 2009, will be the first club in the country to use a monoculture of velvet bent grass on the greens and the course is being built to top United States Golf Association specifications.



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## NEW LINE-UP

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Vitax has appointed three new technical advisers to cover Scotland, South East England, the South West and Northern Ireland.

Douglas Hart, who takes on Scotland, studied at agricultural college before later becoming a greenkeeper at Gullane, where he worked for four years. Having gained diplomas in both agriculture and turf management, Douglas spent 18 years in New Zealand running his own sports ground contracting business, involved with cricket wicket, oval and race-course construction.

Stewart Jeffs, responsible for South East England, also started his career in agriculture but swiftly moved into Amenity Turf and brings over 25 years experience to the post. His aim is to support distributors and ensure that customers are familiar with the Vitax product range. Joe Crawley, returns to Vitax after nearly three years absence to accept a position with greater responsibility and a more specialised, scientific brief. "My area has increased to include not only the South West of England but also Northern Ireland," he said.

L to R - Stewart Jeffs, Douglas Hart and Joe Crawley



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## BIGGA NEW RECRUIT

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Tom Campbell has joined BIGGA as our new Design and Production Editor. Tom replaces Marie Whyld, who worked for BIGGA for six years and left the Association after a period of maternity leave - BIGGA HOUSE send her their best wishes for the future.

Tom, a Liverpool FC season ticket holder, previously worked as a Creative Artworker for Arco and prior to that, a Mac Designer for the Yorkshire Post. He has worked on such publications as Farming in Yorkshire, and Fencing and Landscaping News.

Tom's main love is music. In the past he used to DJ retro electronic music in Hull on a regular basis. When he's not spinning some tunes on the decks, Tom likes to spend time with his cat Wendy.

"I have a passion for designing magazines and was keen to join BIGGA and work on an award-winning publication," said Tom.



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## RETIREMENT PRESENTATION

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After the annual match between BIGGA Scottish East Section and the Golf Club Secretaries, held at West Linton Golf Club recently, a retirement presentation was made by Chairman, Stuart Ferguson, to Jimmy Coombe (ex Gifford Golf Club) and Mike Dennis current Sales Manager (Scotland) of Rigby Taylor.

They each received a pocket watch and a bottle of Whisky.

The absentee from this line-up was Robert T Bruce who is at present holidaying down under.



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## SCOTTISH NATIONAL TOURNAMENT

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The 2008 Scottish National Tournament will be held at Irvine Golf Club, Irvine, Ayrshire, on Monday, June 23, by kind permission of the Captain and Committee. The cost of the event will be £21, which includes coffee/tea, filled roll, evening meal and prizes. (Apprentice fee will be £12). Entry forms will be available at all Section Spring outings and from the Regional Administrator.

All entries with remittance to; Regional Administrator, Peter J. Boyd, 10 Meadowburn Avenue, Newton Mearns, Glasgow G77 6TA by Thursday 12 June, 2008.

Please make cheques payable to BIGGA Scottish Region.

The draw will be posted on the BIGGA website.

*Peter J. Boyd*  
Regional Administrator

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## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE WINS THROUGH TO TURNBERRY

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The Buckinghamshire Golf Club, Denham, Bucks, has won the first regional qualifying tournament of the 2008 John Deere Team Championship golf competition, organised by dealer Golf & Turf Equipment of Wokingham in Berkshire. A total of 17 teams took part in the tournament, which was held in glorious May sunshine at Burnham Beeches Golf Club, near Slough.

"Course Manager, Lee Bishop, really put a lot of effort into the whole event," said organiser, Steve Coone of Golf & Turf. "This was his first big tournament there, and the whole Burnham Beeches team worked very hard to get it set up and running so well on the day."

Buckinghamshire's net score of 59 in the modified scramble event was two shots ahead of Roehampton Golf & Country Club, who took second place on countback. The winning team - made up of executive committee members David Collard and Phil Naylor, Course Manager Erik Kinlon will be travelling to Turnberry in August to play on the championship Ailsa course in the national tournament finals, together with a representative of the dealership, Golf & Turf.



## NEW ASSOCIATION LAUNCHED

The newest greenkeeping association in Europe came into being last year with the founding of the Bulgarian Golfers Greenkeepers Association with the help and support of several greenkeepers well known in the UK.

The Chairman and Executive is Dutchman Arne Van Amerongen, who has worked on a great many golf projects all over the world over the last 25 years. Arne is currently the Golf Project Supervisor for the development of the Peter Harradine, Pravets Golf and Country Club, 55 kilometres north east of Sofia.

Vice Chairman is Mark Van Der Looy, who has worked for over 20 years in the golf industry and who is currently involved in two Bulgarian projects – the Black Sea Rama development on the Black Sea, designed by Gary Player, and another new project near to Sofia.

Association Secretary is Steve Wood, who relocated from the Midlands to Bulgaria several years ago to become Course Manager at St Sofia Golf Club and Spa, 10 kilometres outside Sofia.

The Association has received some outstanding support from the Kirov company, the biggest supplier of earthmoving machinery in Bulgaria, which has signed a three-year contract to sponsor the BGGGA.

Kremena Kaneva, Kirov Account and Sales Manager; Arne Van Amerongen; Julian Milev, Kirov Executive Sales Manager; Steve Wood; Mark Van Der Looy; Silvia Georgieva, Legal Advisor and Seth Underwood, Honorary Member.



## R&A LAUNCH BENCHMARKING SERVICE

The R&A has launched a free web based service to registered users of [bestcourseforgolf.org](http://bestcourseforgolf.org) that provides a means of data capture, analysis and reporting which will enable golf courses to maintain a record of all their relevant information on playing quality, turf quality and course expenditure.

From this pool of information courses will be able to track their own progress from year-to-year and monitor trends and changes that occur. Each course will also be able to reference its own information against other similar golf courses using comparative statistics.

To take advantage of this service, courses should register at [bestcourseforgolf.org](http://bestcourseforgolf.org)



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## CZECH GREENKEEPER EXCHANGE VISIT

Ransomes Jacobsen has supported an exchange visit of Czech greenkeepers organised and facilitated by The Club Company.

Six Course Managers from CZ Golf, a Golf Course Operator and Management company based in Prague, visited The Tytherington Club and spent a week working with Course Manager, Sandy Anderson and his team, looking at best practice on a UK golf course. Ransomes Jacobsen supported the visit helping with the logistics and general travel arrangements.

Nick Brown, Export Business Development Manager at Ransomes Jacobsen, introduced the two companies following the signing of an exclusive supplier contract with CZ Golf by their Czech distributor ITTEC spol. s.r.o.

Explaining the rationale behind the visit he said: "During the negotiations I was asked if we would consider arranging an exchange visit so that the CZ greenkeeping team could improve their understanding of best practice as it applies to the UK. The Club Company is a similar organization to CZ Golf, but on a much larger scale and they are also a Ransomes Jacobsen national account. We contacted Chris Brook, their senior Course Manager who is responsible for all 12 courses within the group, and he immediately got things moving."

"We were only too happy and willing to help," said Chris Brook. "The exchange worked so well that we are considering making it a permanent arrangement."



## STIHL GETS ITS TEETH INTO BRITISH SUPERBIKES

Getting into the fast lane in 2008, outdoor power tool company STIHL GB has signed as an Official Sponsor of the 2008 Bennetts British Superbike Championship - setting two of the country's most popular outdoor brands together and on track for an exciting year. Its first move into major sports sponsorship, the STIHL deal reflects the growing breadth of its user audience, from professional foresters, groundsmen and builders to domestic gardeners and home owners.

British Superbikes currently enjoys the biggest level of support of any motor sport activity in the UK; the appeal of powerful, agile machines working in perfect harmony with man makes Superbikes an ideal fit for STIHL and its range of quality, high performance outdoor power tools.

The British Superbike Championship is Britain's most popular motor sport, attracting big crowds at the circuits and massive television audiences. The 2008 Championship series will see its high-powered teams and heroes competing at 12 events around the country this summer, and on world-renowned racetracks like Brands Hatch, Thruxton, Silverstone and Donington Park. Part of its sponsorship package, the STIHL brand will be prominent at every one of those events, with trackside hoardings and activities off track.

## GREEN LIGHT TO PURE BIODIESEL

Provided the fuel meets the international EN 14214 standard or its equivalent, B100 (ie pure) biodiesel may now be used in machines fitted with John Deere PowerTech Plus or PowerTech E engines that comply with Tier 3 regulations, as well as in engines of earlier designs, said the Deere Power Systems Group recently.

However, a precondition for the use of B100 biodiesel in these engines is the application of the additive John Deere Biodiesel Protect 100, which is now available from John Deere dealers in the UK and Ireland.

To ensure fuel quality meets the requirements of advanced engine technology, B100 biodiesel - i.e. rapeseed oil that has been through an esterification process and not cold pressed rape oil - must be obtained from a certified supplier and stored appropriately. In addition, operators must follow the instructions provided in the service manual of the machine.

The company has been researching the use of native rapeseed oil in Tier 3 engines since 2006, together with the German Agency for Renewable Energy (FNR), the University of Rostock and VWP, a specialist vegetable oil technology business.