

THE GREENKEEPING KID

By The Kid

There was this kid who left school. Used to bum around on the back of his mates motorbike, getting merry on six pints and wondering what was out beyond the twinkling stars.

His mate was a greenkeeper. Kid wondered what the hell that was and why anyone would want to be one. Cutting grass all day was not what was out beyond the twinkling stars. One day his mate said 'Hey Kid, I'm fed up buying all the beer, do you fancy helping out at the golf club for a few weeks so you can pay your round?' Kid said 'Well that'll be a laugh, what do I have to do?'

After a month Kid thought, 'Hell this is hard work but there is something about it though, there is something about it.'

Kid had always been a rebel. Well, he had always been a teenager, which qualified him, but he went extra. When he was merry he sang union songs and dreamed he was Che Guevara. Working at the golf club wasn't quite it, but there was something about it though. Kid immediately joined the 'Association', the BGGGA. It wasn't a union but hell, Kid could see himself marching down Whitehall with his BGGGA banner singing 'We Shall Overcome' and shouting 'Fair pay for greenkeepers, balls to golfers!!' Kid drank quite a bit.

Within a year Kid had got the woman thing. In his actions he wasn't Kid any more but he still liked to think he was. He followed her down south and went to work for a council run golf course. Kid paid his union dues every week and could sing his songs with more feeling. 'Us council workers are gonna sort that government out!' Yeah Kid, yeah!

Kid helped to form a local section of the BGGGA and rose to be chairman. He was pushing for revolution but found that most of the time they would rather debate whether they should play a greensome or a Texas Scramble and 'Was an umbrella a good 1st prize?' Kid wasn't into golf.

Some time on Kid heard about some other rebels who weren't happy with the Association and wanted to form a new Association to progress the lot of greenkeepers through education. Now, education was something Kid was keen on. He had heard his dad talk about education and his dad was smart. He had his six pints and decided that he didn't really like school but he liked education. He would join. Look out EIGGA cause Kid's a-rollin' in!

'Christ these guys are good', thought Kid as he sat in the dining Hall of King's College, Cambridge, banging slowly and rhythmically on the big wooden table to show his appreciation as the guest speakers marched in for supper. Kid was right in the heart of establishment, right under its vaulted roof. 'These guys are really good and they're not even real rebels' thought Kid. Along with the many others gathered in academia, he knew something was happening. He was not sure what, but something was happening. It was kinda like that feeling Kid got when he was out in the early morning by himself at that special place on the golf course. Even the six pints couldn't match that. Kid only had four, went to bed and slept like a big fat ginger Tom on a Cornish windowsill.

Well time passed and Kid learned all he could. EIGGA joined in with the Scottish guys, 'real rebels the Scottish guys' thought Kid, to form the BIGGA.

Things took off. The BIGGA got involved in all sorts of education and were sitting down with the employers and the governing bodies to improve basic working conditions by empowerment through education. Kid began to realise that railing against things was not always the best way of getting them changed. Shouting from the sidelines was not as productive as getting on the pitch and working your socks off. It was not half as rewarding either. Kid was down to two pints now but still singing his songs.

Kid knew from his own experience that the more educated and professional he got the more respect he and his workmates commanded and the better they were treated. He wanted everyone to get that message and set about spreading it. He was working hard on the left wing to supply the crosses for his team when one day the manager pulled him to one side and said 'Hey, Kid, you're not a kid anymore, how about being Captain and leading the team.'

'Christ sakes!' thought Kid, but he was owing. He was owing all the beer from the motorbike rides, he was owing all the revolutionaries, he was owing all the midfielders who were running harder than he was. He didn't really want to do all the meeting and greeting, all the shaking hands and dishing out prizes, all the 'saying the right thing', but he was owing big time. Kid went establishment.

He went from patrolling the left wing to roaming free in the central role. He was now seeing close up what the right back was doing and where he was coming from. All the members of the team had different attributes and he saw them in a different light. They had different backgrounds, different philosophies, different perspectives. Some didn't have any pints at all or ever even wonder what was out beyond the twinkling stars. But they all had one thing in common, they all wanted to do their best for the team and they all wanted to support each other, in whatever way they could. From a distance Kid had always thought that the right back was a bit of a plodder but close up Kid could see the sweat and hear the clattering studs. He put his head in where it hurt for the team. Kid admired him a lot.

'It takes some time to realise that you are not always right', thought Kid and Kid now knew that he was not always right. He had his story and everyone else had theirs. It is not really about who has the best story, it's more about listening to all the stories and then doing what is best for the team. It's about respecting others viewpoints. It's about staying together and talking things through. It's about inclusiveness, not isolation. It's about compromise, not conflict. It's about unity, not independence. In short, it is about association. Oh, and of course, it is about wondering what is out beyond the twinkling stars.

'Best regards to everyone who has helped me along the way.'

Kid