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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Welcome



Surviving the Downturn

As our Chairman, Kenny Mackay, states in his column this month, you are all going to have to become good accountants. His comments come as the world faces up to a recession the likes of which we haven't seen since the early '90s. Whether it will be as bad as then - a time when negative equity entered the language of all too many, including my good self - remains to be seen, but as Kenny says it's going to require some sound financial decision-making to ensure you can maintain your courses to the best level your budgetary levels allow.

This month there are two articles which touch on the subject. Robert Clive, of 360 Golf, gives some thoughts and advice on the credit crunch, while Peter Jones, starts a series examining how a new course can be developed in such a climate and looks at the decision which will have to be made to ensure sustainability from a commercial perspective.

I believe the next 18 months or so will be very much a time for batoning down the hatches but it will also be a time for trying to manage the expectation levels of members. By definition less money coming into a golf club means decisions will have to be made on how best to use that money. Robert Clive is adamant that compromising on the quality of the golf course is not the way forward - reputations are hard to earn and easy to lose - and cutting back on budgets and manpower is a quick way to see a course deteriorate. However, it may be the case that projects might have to be shelved until sunnier times return.

We can always hope that the doom mongers around have got it wrong and the fact that employment is strong, and interest rates relatively low might mean any slump is minor compared to previous downturns. However, there is nothing better to remove the gloom than to lose yourself in a competitive fourball on a Saturday morning. So, you never know, golf might be fine.

The news of Bert Cross' death took the wind from my sails. I'd known Bert from very early in my BIGGA career and he was present at just about every major BIGGA event. He was a mini bus driver for the Irish teams which played in the Hayter Challenges - he had some tales to tell after those experiences. He was the Official Starter at the National Championship; a key member of the BIGGA Open Support Team; a regular at Harrogate Week; a National Board member for many years and Section Secretary for the North West Section. Always, always, he had a smile on his face and was happy to help in whatever way he could.

He was one of those guys whose first name was all it took to identify him and it would be fair to say that, to many, there was only one Bert in BIGGA.

I shall miss him as will his legion of friends and colleagues.

GOLF IN HISTORIC PARKS & LANDSCAPES



Many colleagues in golf, historic environment, landscape and nature conservation professions helped English Heritage develop its guidance on golf in historic parks and landscapes. English Heritage has now published a new leaflet.

The leaflet sets out English Heritage's position and criteria for assessment development proposals. Further guidance to support this leaflet and the leaflet itself is available at two websites: www.english-heritage.org.uk/parksandgardens and www.helm.org.uk

ROYAL MID-SURREY GREENKEEPER IS NATIONAL KARATE CHAMPION



17-year old Harry Cannon, Assistant Greenkeeper at Royal Mid-Surrey Golf Club in Richmond, has recently won a Gold Medal at The English Karate Federation National Championships in Sheffield. This follows up Harry's recent success at The World Championships in Istanbul back in September where he represented England and lost in the quarter finals to the eventual winner. Karate is not yet an Olympic sport and consequently there is not much investment available for it. Harry's expenses for his trip to Turkey were kindly sponsored by R&K Kensett Ltd and Steve Jones Consultancy.

Harry has been training for 11 years and achieved his black belt four years ago. With an increasing tournament and demonstrations schedule he is about to go for his 2nd dan black belt.

Harry joined Royal Mid-Surrey as a seasonal greenkeeper in July 2007 coming straight from high school. He was employed full-time as an assistant greenkeeper three months later in September. Karate has instilled a composed discipline in Harry and a ruthless determination which is now being reflected in his professional life.

Harry talks excitedly about his greenkeeping and turfgrass science career and enthuses that, "I hope to launch a major assault on the turfgrass industry over the next three to five years and am happy that Royal Mid-Surrey gives me the most dynamic platform of some world renown from which to build a successful and fulfilling career."

Doug Tate, The Inner Course Head Greenkeeper at Royal Mid-Surrey offers an insight into the unique skills Harry brings to the RM-S course management team.

"Harry's 'no-fear' attitude and intense application to his work ensure that he is well equipped to achieve his short and medium-term career ambitions. And he is useful if ever any sales reps call by without an appointment."

GREENKEEPER OF THE YEAR RETURNS FROM STUDIES



Toro's Student Greenkeeper of the Year 2007 has recently returned from an eight-week educational trip to the USA.

Avon Bridges, 27, won the trip after beating off stiff competition in his regional heat and then from seven fellow greenkeepers in the national finals held at BIGGA House in Aldwark, near York in autumn of last year to take the prestigious title.

Having completed a six-week residential turf management course at the University of Massachusetts, Avon is now back at work as head greenkeeper of Luton Hoo Golf Club in Bedfordshire, where he is putting his newly acquired knowledge to good use.

He says of his prize placement: "My trip was pretty intense to say the least! I've attended 40 hours of lectures every week for six weeks. The whole thing's been really hard work, but worth it. It's been fantastic to meet greenkeepers from different parts of the world and to get an insight into different styles of greenkeeping."

In particular, Avon says that the course has reinforced the practical learning he gained while at Oaklands College, which put him forward for the Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year competition. As he explains: "There's a far more academic approach to learning about greenkeeping in the States, so I've learned a lot more about the science behind my existing knowledge. I know a great deal more about soil types and fertilisers."

Avon's trip also included visits to The Toro Company's headquarters in Minneapolis, the Toro Irrigation Division and the GCSAA golf industry show in Orlando. "I'd like to thank everyone from The Toro Company for making me feel so welcome," he adds.

Avon Bridges (below right) and fellow students study a soil sample as part of their residential turf management course at the University of Massachusetts. (Image courtesy of the University of Massachusetts Amherst.)



DEVON & CORNWALL SPRING WORKSHOP

A great attendance of over 60 guests, predominantly greenkeepers, attended the spring workshop based on grasses including breeding, selection, nutrient and water requirements.

The day was designed to help people consider such topics when opting towards a sustainable approach and cover a range of advice that hopefully encouraged individuals to make their own minds up about such sustainable options.

Steve Denton, Grass Seed Development Manager for Rigby Taylor, delivered presentations on a vast array of uses and areas that various grasses can be utilised, characteristics of the four main species to consider when selecting, what future developments he predicts and also why seed prices are higher this year than they have been for a while.

Steve brought Bernhard Bayle who was the Research Director for Top Green in Les Alleuds and is now a consultant for Top Green who work in partnership with Rigby Taylor. Bernhard did a sterling job explaining the many breeding processes which certainly made one concentrate with his French accent.

Geoff Yelland from Amega Sciences spoke about the effects of amino and humic acids and wetting agents modes of actions and how they work.

Steve Gingell who is the Southern Area Manager Agronomist for the STRI rounded the day off with a very interesting presentation on managing water application and future considerations when sourcing.

Graeme Gallimore who coordinated the day said "Everybody appeared to enjoy the day and the feedback was positive highlighting some topics for future workshops".

The Section would like to thank: the guest speakers immensely; sponsors for the day who included Rigby Taylor, Inturf, Top green and Sports Metals; Fingle Glen Golf Club for there hospitality and BIGGA HQ for some assistance with subsidiary.

NEW STAFF



Sustainable LED lighting provider, Greenled, has appointed new staff to help in its mission to reduce carbon emissions and energy costs. Stuart Clowes takes up the position of sales executive and Will Morgan joins as Greenled's general business manager. Both will work from Greenled's offices in Tetbury, Gloucestershire.

Stuart Clowes brings a wealth of experience in high-level sales of visuals and lighting to his new position. Stuart's nationwide role will include business development of Greenled's target markets, giving tutorials on the benefits of sustainable lighting, as well as assisting in the company's recruitment and marketing processes.

HORTICULTURE STUDENTS COMPLETE FINAL PROJECT

Third year students studying the BTEC National Diploma in Horticulture at Writtle College have successfully completed the design and build of three new gardens on College grounds. Designs for the gardens begun back in September 2007, the construction project lasted two weeks and was completed mid March.

The students, who carried out the build as an assessed unit within their course, had to design a garden to a client brief, draw up the specifications and detail drawings, quantify the materials required and then build the 6x6 metre garden in ten days.

The Gardens will be used as outdoor classrooms, showing design principles, use of materials, construction issues and horticultural maintenance tasks.

KEY SENIOR MANAGEMENT CHANGE

Crown Golf has announced an important change to its senior management team.

Founding Director, John Weir has stepped back into the role of Chief Operating Officer for the Binfield, Berks-based company - which has 33 golf venues in the UK and more than 50 courses.

He takes over from CEO Peter Manby, who left the company at the end of February to pursue an opportunity in the hotel sector.

Said John: "Peter has had a positive effect upon the company during his time with us and we wish him well in his return to hotel management."

Crown Golf has stepped up the development of its extensive property portfolio and as a result is looking for a new CEO in the UK to optimise both ongoing operations and the property portfolio.

HEAD OF GOLF APPOINTED

Formby Hall Golf Resort & Spa in Merseyside, which is set to become home to the country's first PGA National Residential Golf Academy in May, has appointed Matthew Allen-Chillman as head of golf.

Matthew, a PGA professional, joins the resort from Aston Wood Golf Club and will be responsible for nurturing existing relations, driving golf tourism and making the game accessible to a wider audience, as well as developing and promoting talent via the resort's PGA golf academy.

NORTHWICK PARK OPENED BY FOOTBALL LEGEND

Playgolf Northwick Park opened recently as London's premier 9-hole golf course - after unveiling the latest hole on its unique layout, which features replicas of some of the most famous holes in golf.

Former England and Tottenham Hotspur football legend Les Ferdinand officially opened the full 9-hole course in April, in his role as a Playgolf Ambassador.

The 'Majors Course' at the Harrow complex will also be set up permanently for PowerPlay Golf - the new way to play golf featuring two flags on every green.

Northwick Park general manager, Jimmy Wallace, said: "We are delighted with the latest phase of the course development, which now makes us London's premier 9-hole golf course."

BIGGA GOLF DAY

Following the success of last year's BIGGA Golf Day £3,923.00 was donated to The Rainbow Trust Children's Charity. The event is to be held again this year 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 4 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

MAPPING SOME OF WORLD'S BEST COURSES

SkyCaddie GPS, the official rangefinder of the PGA, has completed mapping some of the world's most famous golf courses – including 2010 Ryder Cup course Celtic Manor and 2011 Open Championship venue Royal St Georges.

With more than 2,100 courses now mapped in Europe and having become the PGA's official distance measuring device, SkyCaddie starts the summer seeking to strengthen its position as the world's leading GPS rangefinder.

In recent weeks the company's 'course enablers' - the team of professional mappers who walk every inch of a course to create a bespoke SkyCaddie GPS footprint - has also mapped The Duke's, Duchess's and Marquess's courses at Woburn; the Old Course and Cashen Course at Ballyunion; and the flagship Majlis Course and Nick Faldo-designed Wadi Course at The Emirates Golf Club, Dubai.

And The Belfry, Wentworth and all 12 courses at Turkey holiday hotspot Belek – including the Montgomerie Course at Papillon Golf Club - have also been painstakingly measured.

SkyCaddie has now mapped 80% of the UK's courses, with the aim of reaching 90% by the end of May.

STUDENTS BENEFIT FROM EXPRESS STUDY



Having recently purchased a set of Express Dual and Anglemaster 3000's for their Turfgrass Education Centre, Myerscough College has been working with Bernhard and Company for training and education programmes for their students.

“Like our relationship with Ransomes Jacobsen and Kubota, Bernhard and Company fit nicely into our portfolio of what we are trying to achieve in sportsturf education and training,” said Stewart Brown, Sportsturf Team Leader.

Prior to their partnership with Bernhard and Company, Stewart and his team had not had equipment that met 21st century requirements and were therefore limited in their resources and ability to teach their students about mower blade sharpening and the agronomic benefits to turf.

Myerscough have big plans to make the most out of their newest investment. Along with using the grinders for student training and education, Myerscough are looking to develop short bespoke courses for greenkeepers and groundskeepers.



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BIGGA SCOTTISH NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Once again we made our way to the newly named Business Learning Centre, Carnegie College for our annual Conference in March where we welcomed 140 delegates.

In charge of proceedings for the morning session was Iain MacLeod, our Education Convenor and Course Manager at Tain Golf Club. Iain had the task of introducing our speakers, Gordon Holms, Director of Indigrow Ltd, Jonathan Smith, Chief Executive, Golf Environment Europe and to finish off the morning session, Gerry Byrne from the K Club in Ireland.

After lunch the annual presentation was made to the Student of The Year. This year we had two winners, Neil Plenderleith, Gleneagles Hotel and Jamie Duncan, Brodick Golf Club, Isle of Arran. The presentation was made by the Chairman of the Scottish Region, Stuart Greenwood, Course Superintendent, North Berwick West Links. Neil was in attendance, but unfortunately Jamie was unable to attend.

The afternoon session was chaired by Stuart Greenwood who introduced Allan Patterson, Head Greenkeeper at the Castle Course, St. Andrews Links, Ron Alexander of Ron Alexander Associates in America and Archie Stewart of Land Maps.

All speakers on the day were most interesting and entertaining. The Board very much appreciated the time and effort they made to contribute so much to the success of the conference. The Board also wish to thank the delegates for their attendance and participation.

The Conference for 2009 will be at the same venue on Tuesday, March 3.

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SCOTTISH NATIONAL TOURNAMENT

The 2008 Scottish National Tournament will be held at Irvine Golf Club, Irvine, Ayrshire on Monday 23 June 2008 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.

BERT CROSS 1934-2008



BIGGA has lost one of its most longstanding and best known members. Bert Cross died suddenly in hospital in early April leaving a void which will be difficult to fill in his native Liverpool and north west as well as the Association as a whole.

North West Section Secretary for 30 years, Bert has also served as Northern Regional Chairman and was on the National Board of Management until as recently as last year. But his influence on the Association stretched much further than that. He was a key figure in the organisation of the Mere, later to become the North West, Seminar, while those members who have worked on the BIGGA

Open Support Team and played in the National Championship will be more than familiar with Bert's contribution, in the Cabin at The Open, and on the 1st tee as Starter at the National Championship.

There can scarcely have been a BIGGA event of any consequence at which Bert was not a key figure, often doing the essential behind the scenes roles which are often difficult to fill. For example he would often talk of the mixture of frustration and humour involved in collecting the Irish representatives of the Hayter Challenge from the ferry and getting them to and from the hotel. According to his wife, Marie, his association and work with BIGGA was something of which he was immensely proud.

Bert was born in Liverpool in 1934 and joined the Liverpool City Council Parks and Gardens' Department at the age of 15. Aged 18 he joined the Kings Regiment as part of his National Service and served in Korea where, by coincidence, he first met BIGGA Past Chairman, Gordon Child. He returned to the Park and Gardens Department two years later and worked in the greenhouses where he specialised in growing Orchids and Biomeleads which he showed, and won awards with, across the country including Chelsea Flower Show.

Always a keen and able golfer he applied for and got the job of Head Greenkeeper at Allerton Golf Club in 1978 and he worked there for seven years before being promoted to Courses Manager of Liverpool City Council's three municipal courses – Allerton, Kirkby and Bowring Park. He carried out that role until 1990 when he was again promoted, this time to Contracts Manager for the Council, a job he did until he took early retirement at the age of 59 three years later.

Not one for a pipe and slippers retirement, Bert and Marie throw themselves into another project – making at least 10 trips, each between a fortnight and a month, to Zambia to work at the Kasisi Orphanage, taking with them clothes and medical supplies.

Bert and Marie were adored by the 270 orphans, all with either AIDS or HIV, and Marie is going to complete the next scheduled trip, in June, where she will spread some of Bert's ashes at the orphanage.

Bert is survived by Marie, and sons, Peter, Head Greenkeeper at Blundells Hill GC, and Anthony, daughter-in-law, Yumi, and grandson, Koji.

Donations can be made to the Kasisi Orphanage.



THAT'S TEAMWORK

In this month's article David Golding, GTC's Education Director, gives readers the latest example of what he believes has been one of golf's greatest partnerships

We often hear about the value of teamwork and partnerships and this must surely be the message for the future of golf?

Those of you connected with the various aspects of golf will be able to recall the great partnerships and teams, which have resulted in success at the very top of the sport?

Professional Golfer and Caddie, Ryder Cup Captains and their teams - how often have we shed a tear of emotion when success has come after a period of dedication to practice or simply a great bonding of like-minded people with just one aim, to be the best, winners!

We all love to be winners whether it is at work, enjoying our hobbies or maybe just a "friendly" game of golf on the kids Playstation or Xbox!

The GTC, I believe has a great team driving our sector forward in terms of giving our golf clubs and greenkeepers the opportunity to be winners.

Our Board has representation from the English, Scottish and Welsh Golf Unions, BIGGA, the R&A and the PGA European Tour and it is their funding support that allows Fiona and I, as the full time staff, to develop the team further in partnership with a tremendous network of associates.

I must say the GTC Technical Committee and our small number of Liaison Officers have helped to ensure all the aims and objectives agreed by our Board identified in a Business Plan are carried out.

However, it does not stop there! The GTC has many, what I call 'friends' of the GTC, who are all totally 110% behind greenkeeper training.

Those individuals, too many to mention by name, in their own way contribute so much to ensure we can continue to support employers and greenkeepers when the call comes into the office or nowadays the email!

Those many organisations and training providers who really deliver the education and training in greenkeeping must continue to lead through having a team committed to be the best.

We have discussed, at recent GTC meetings, the various issues currently facing golf here in Britain and we must all promote the ethos of partnership and teamwork, no more so than when the club or course appears to have problems.

The GTC firmly believes the lessons learned by those successful companies, who not only survived the last recession but also thrived, were those businesses that resisted the temptation to cut or even stop staff training and actually invested in staff development.

We don't want to talk about recessions in golf but through staff development sessions, teamwork develops and at the clubs where this already happens by bringing all the various "departments" together, a better understanding of each others roles and responsibilities proves to be of great benefit to everybody involved and inevitably the business succeeds.

I know many Course Managers who have benefited from the employer led training sessions and they not only gained a greater knowledge of the golf club from the employers perspective but also held their own development and bonding sessions within the greenkeeping team.

The GTC has since 1993 operated independently from offices within the grounds of Aldwark Manor near York and while this has given a clear indication of how the GTC is an employer and employee independent body, there has recently been a proposal for use to share resources by moving into BIGGA House.

I am pleased to inform readers that the Boards of BIGGA and the GTC have approved this move and while both organisations will operate totally independently of each other, it does make sense to work closely together when both bodies only want the same goals.

I truly believe the move, due to take place in early May, will be seen as a very positive initiative and one that strengthens an already strong partnership.

The education and training of greenkeepers, to provide golf club employers with the standards they require is what we are all about.

Contact David direct: david@the-gtc.co.uk or tel: 01347 838640.

GTC is supported by:





Industry Update

GRASSFORM COMPLETE WORK ON THE "RJ NATIONAL"

Building a golf course on a factory site in the middle of Ipswich may seem like a crazy idea, but not when the client is Ransomes Jacobsen. This exciting course construction opportunity fell to Essex based Grassform Ltd, who built the three-hole course on the site during 2007. Known unofficially within Ransomes Jacobsen as the "RJ National", the course features a challenging set of holes, bunkers and water hazard just yards from the manufacturing facility and offices of the well known mowing machinery company.

David Withers, Managing Director of Ransomes Jacobsen, commented: "This has been a great project, and we are so pleased with the result, which reflects the quality of the team we put together. Our main contractor Grassform did a fantastic job.

"We have taken the decision to allow the course to grow in through to September and then celebrate the opening with an event to thank everyone who participated in its construction. It is a superb addition to the facilities we have here at Ipswich and will enable us to demonstrate our machines as well as our acknowledged environmental leadership."



DIVOT-STOPPER

As every greenkeeper knows, tee pegs can be a pain in the neck, puncturing tyres and knocking out blade settings on mowers.

In 1994 Nigel Nangreave thought he had found the answer with a biodegradable tee that snapped as easily as an ordinary wooden tee peg, but would biodegrade within a few months, however, players didn't like it.

In 2004 he tried again with a dome shaped tee made from grass, but that one was too expensive to produce due to machinery costs and in any case was not accepted by players for a number of reasons.

Two years later he went back to the drawing board and came up with Divot-Stopper, a fine grade biodegradable green paper cylindrical tee that ticked all the right boxes.

In November 07, Aston Wood GC agreed to trial Divot-Stopper and provided their members and guests with complimentary divot-stoppers that players collected from a tray with scorecards, and over the winter period it is anticipated at least 40,000 divots were prevented from ever happening. Online demonstrations can be viewed at www.divot-stopper.co.uk

PARTS TRAINING PLACES UP FOR GRABS

Applications are already being received from John Deere dealers for places on the 2008/2009 Parts Tech training programme for aspiring parts apprentices.

Launched by John Deere in partnership with Brooksby Melton College in 2007, Parts Tech is the first such specialist programme for the agricultural and grounds care industries. It is run on similar lines to the award winning John Deere Ag Tech and Turf Tech apprentice engineering technician programmes, which have been running since 1992.

Parts Tech is an all-round programme, designed to provide John Deere dealers with the opportunity to train their parts support staff to the same high professional standards as their service technicians. The 12-month training programme is based on the existing City & Guilds NVQ course in Vehicle Parts Operations, Levels 2.

Due to start in September 2008, the next John Deere Parts Tech programme is available for enrolment now. Further details are available from local John Deere dealers or from Brooksby Melton College, tel: 01664 850850 or 855444.

NEW WEBSITE HAS ARRIVED

Mascus has launched an updated and improved version of its online platform. It aims to provide a one-stop resource for those looking to advertise and purchase used machinery and equipment. Mascus, the Pan-European e-marketplace for used equipment and transportation vehicles, was established in October 2000 and launched in January 2001. After almost seven years of market presence, it is already internationally-known among many buyers and sellers of used truck and trailers, forklifts, construction, agricultural, forest and grounds care machines.

The new website www.mascus.co.uk has been designed in accordance with updated technology and customers' feedback.



STEPPED DOWN

Charterhouse Turf Machinery Managing Director Philip Threadgold stepped down from the day to day management of Charterhouse Turf Machinery at the end of March.



Philip, a founder of Charterhouse Turf Machinery some 26 years ago, has been Managing Director since 2002.

Philip plans to remain in the industry and will retain an important role as an ongoing advisor to Charterhouse Turf Machinery, with a special focus on the development of Soil Harmony.

Overall management and control of Charterhouse Turf Machinery will be passed to Geoffrey Burgess, Director, representing the main board of Redexim, which owns the company. Nick Darking remains in charge of sales working in the south of the UK and Wales while Richard Heywood looks after the North of England and Scotland with full parts and service back up from the Charterhouse team in Haslemere.

FOURTH GENERATION JOINS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Frank Barenbrug has been appointed to the Royal Barenbrug Group's board of directors.



The fourth generation of Barenbrug to join the board of this Netherlands-based family business, Frank will assume responsibility for the group's global business development, marketing, sales and production strategies, working from head office in Oosterhout Nijmegen in the Netherlands.

Frank, 34, has been with Barenbrug for over a decade. Having studied International Trade at the Agricultural University of Wageningen in his home country, Frank began his career as export manager for an international packaging producer and went on to join Barenbrug as a member of New Zealand Agriseeds' marketing team in 1997. Key positions with Barenbrug's South African, Argentinean and European operations followed, before he most recently became managing director of Barenbrug Palaversich in Argentina in 2005.

PRESTIGIOUS GOLF RESORT CHOOSES RANSOMES JACOBSEN

The Kaya Eagles Golf Resort in Belek, Turkey, which opened in November last year, has selected Ransomes Jacobsen as their preferred supplier for course maintenance machinery and E-Z-GO for golf cars.

The 18-hole course was designed by Irish golf course designer and Master PGA Professional David Jones on a compact site, which although relatively short at 5,900 metres provides a test for golfers of all abilities.

The course is close to the Kaya resort and includes many water features including six lakes, all faced with rock and extensively landscaped. Facilities include a state-of-the-art clubhouse, a 280 metre long driving range, 700 square metre practice putting green and a soon-to-be-completed golf hotel in the middle of the complex.

UEFA President and former captain of the West German football team, Franz Beckenbauer, was the guest of honour at the official opening.

TORO AND MARRIOTT SIGN PARTNERSHIP DEAL

Toro and Marriott International have signed a worldwide partnership agreement that will see Toro machinery and irrigation products supplied to all Marriott golf properties outside the United States and Canada until at least 2012.

The new deal will benefit the Marriott hotel and resort group's existing 28 golf properties outside the US and Canada, plus all its new developments across the globe.



Membership



MEMBERSHIP SERVICES OFFICER, JUSTINE DE TAURE PROVIDES AN UPDATE ON MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Here in membership we have been working hard on making our systems more workable so that memberships can be renewed more easily and efficiently! We also have a new system in place for mass emailing. This will mean that renewals can be done by email, saving time, delays with post and the trees! Obviously this system will only be as good as the information we have on record, so please if you have an email address can you check that we have up to date information. Any members without email address will be contacted by post as usual.

This month we would like to remind you of the Legal Helpline and what it can offer our members.

Legal Helpline Freephone 0800 177 7891

What is covered

Section 1 Personal injury

We will pay the costs we have agreed to of you taking any legal action as a result of a sudden and specific accident which causes your death or bodily injury. We will provide this cover as long as:

- The accident happens within the period of insurance and the territorial limit;
- The legal action is brought within the territorial limit;
- You have a reasonable chance of successfully recovering damages at all times.

The most we will pay for all claims arising out of one event is £60,000 (including a maximum of £5000 in respect of medical costs and expenses). We will not provide cover for the following:

Any claim arising out of any legal action against you. any claim arising out of an allegation of clinical negligence.

Section 2 Contract cover

We will pay the costs we have agreed to of you taking or defending any legal action following a breach of contract you have for:

- Buying, selling or renting goods or services. buying or selling your permanent home.
- Buying, selling, renting or insuring a motor vehicle or its spare parts or accessories; or servicing, repairing or testing a motor vehicle.

We will provide this cover as long as

- The dispute started within the period of insurance;
- Any legal action is brought within the territorial limit; and
- You have a reasonable chance of successfully recovering damages, defending the legal action or settling the dispute in another way, at all times.

The most we will pay for all claims arising out of one event is £60,000, We will not provide cover for the following: Disputes for amounts less than:

- £1000 if it is to do with buying or selling a motor vehicle; or
- £100 if it is about something else.

Section 3

Employment contract We will pay the costs we have agreed to of you taking any legal action against your employer following a breach of your contract for your full time employment or permanent part time employment including drafting a Compromise Agreement and providing representation at Mediation.

We will provide this cover as long as:

- you entered into the contract within the territorial limit
- the dispute starts within the period of insurance;
- any legal action is brought within the territorial limit and
- you have a reasonable chance of successfully recovering damages or settling the dispute in another way. The most we will pay for all claims arising out of one event is £60,000.

Section 4 Disciplinary hearings

We will pay the costs of representing you at an internal disciplinary hearing before your employer. We will provide this cover as long as the incident which leads to you being subject to a disciplinary hearing happened within the period of insurance and within the territorial limit. The most we will pay for all claims arising out of one event is £60,000.

Costs

We will pay the following:

- The professional fees and expenses reasonably and properly charged by the Legal representative, up to the standard rates set by the courts, which cannot be recovered from your opponent.
- Your opponent's costs which you are ordered to pay by a civil court or tribunal.
- Your medical costs and expenses that are deemed by us to be recoverable from the person responsible for your injury resulting in a claim under Section 1 of this policy. The most we will pay for medical costs and expenses will be £5,000.

We will only pay costs which are necessary and in proportion to the value of your claim.

To get a full details please call the Legal Helpline 0800 177 7891 or speak to us at BIGGA Tel; 01347 833818 option 1.

The new members list can now be found in the members section at www.bigga.org.uk

Learning & Development

Key Sponsorship:

UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL OF GREENKEEPERS

The funding provided by Gold and Silver Key Sponsors is used to produce training and career aids, DVDs, CD Roms, field guides and provide refunds for training fees and subsidised learning and development courses. The funding also helps support seminars, workshops, courses, the lending library, careers advice, posters and manuals.

Many young greenkeepers owe their career progression to the assistance they've had from the Learning and Development Fund. An equal number of established greenkeepers have also been able to access the fund to continue their professional development thanks to the donations of the Gold and Silver Key Sponsors.

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING KEY SPONSORS



GOLDEN KEY



Golden Key Individual Members

JH Greasley; WJ Rogers; Andy Campbell MG, CGCS; Iain A Macleod; Tom Smith; Frank Newberry; Christopher Lomas MG, Lee Strutt MG.



SILVER KEY



Silver Key Individual Members

Ade Archer; Steven Tierney; Paul Jenkins; Iain Barr; Richard McGlynn; Steve Dixon; Sam Langrick.

SAMI COLLINS, HEAD OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROVIDES AN UPDATE



The clocks have finally changed and it feels like summer might be on its way. The light nights always raise the spirits for those of us that are office bound and provide the opportunity to get out into the fresh air in the evening. You are lucky being out there on the golf course on the lovely spring days we're experiencing!

Toro Student of the Year Award 2008



The Toro Student of the Year Award 2008 was launched in late February when application forms were sent to all training providers in the United Kingdom.

To enter the Award, and be in with the chance of winning the eight week Toro Scholarship in the USA, students must be studying for N/SVQ Level 2 or a National Certificate or Diploma course and must be nominated by their college tutor.

Students who are nominated will attend a regional interview in early July and if successful, will attend the National Final at BIGGA HOUSE in September.

It's not only the winning student that receives a prize, the college tutor that has nominated them also wins a trip to attend the Golf Industry Show in New Orleans and the two runners-up both win a trip to Harrogate Week 2009.

The closing date has been extended to Friday 9 May 2008.

For further details on the Award visit the Education page of the BIGGA website www.bigga.org.uk/education.

Congratulations must go to Lewis Birch, who, following the Student of the Year Award 2007, successfully applied for the Ohio State Internship programme and is now working at Scioto Country Club, Ohio until October 2008. Good Luck Lewis, enjoy the States!

Learning & Development Updates and Reminders

BIGGA Higher Education Scholarships

Supported by: RANSOMES JACOBSEN
A Textron Company

Higher Education Scholarships have been awarded to: Steven Halliwell – Online Foundation Degree Sports Turf

The BIGGA Library

One new book has been added to the library in the last month: Golf Greens and Green-Keeping – Horace Hutchinson

This is the first book to be published in a new series, The Classics of Golf Course Maintenance and Construction. This book is an exact reprint of the original 1906 classic. It's a celebration of the modern-day golf course Superintendent and takes you back to the roots of the profession, providing the cornerstone on which current maintenance and construction practices were built. With vintage photographs of St. Andrews, Hoylake, Royal St. Georges, North Berwick, Prestwick, Walton Heath, and more show the mastery of their original designs.

BIGGA Golf Environment Competition 2008



The closing date for the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition 2008 is Friday 20 June. Further information can be found on the BIGGA Website www.bigga.org.uk/education.

Continuing Professional Development

The current CPD year ends on 30 June 2008. To receive your 2008 Certificate of Continuing Professional Development you need to have a minimum of 10 CPD credits since 1 July 2007. Send your completed CPD credit claim forms to Rachael Duffy, Learning & Development Administrator.

FREE Courses in England

A new Government initiative in England is offering free Maths and English courses to adult learners. Full details are available from www.direct.gov.uk/geton or on 0800 66 0800.

Learning & Development

GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS CAN BE GREAT AID TO GOLF COURSE MANAGEMENT

By Mary Purcell

The use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) on the golf course is not entirely new, but it is the larger, more-affluent courses that appear to be benefiting from it more than their smaller counterparts – simply due to finances.

GIS technology is built upon a broad range of sciences and disciplines, ranging from planning and ecology to image-processing and computer technology.

Satellites, Global Position Systems (GPS), aerial photos and computer imaging are increasingly being used to construct layered maps of landscapes to take into account the whole system – from soils to interlinking habitats and ecosystems to unique areas such as wetlands and buffer zones – to aid course managers and greenkeepers to come up with unique and optimum management systems designed specifically for their own course.

When used to evaluate the importance of all types of habitats and wildlife populations, GIS allows the course to be managed as an overall, interacting unit rather than as isolated patches.

For the technically-minded, GIS is a computer system capable of capturing, storing, analysing, manipulating and displaying geographically-referenced or spatial data. This data can be captured (and displayed) as points, lines (series of co-ordinates) and polygons (area shapes). GIS can display 2D and 3D characteristics.

Integrated GIS/GPS gives the opportunity to collect data in the field and is gaining a lot of interest. Portable GPS and GIS allow for the speedy capture and analysis of data in the field. Capturing data using GPS (hand-held for field work), hand-tracing or manually digitising points, and scanners are other means of data input into a system.

GIS use

The use of GIS is endless. It can investigate:

- Irrigation
- Topography
- Lake volumes
- Slope analysis
- Feasibility studies
- Soil classification mapping
- Design natural or wildlife areas

Some common uses may include the following:

1. Nutrient planning

Remote-sensing techniques can be used to assess turf nitrogen status, allowing nitrogen to be spoon-fed to the turf to provide sufficient quantities without overloading the soil with nitrates.

Historically, agronomic practices such as fertiliser/pesticide application have been made at field level without taking into account spatial variability of soil or turf properties. The adoption of precision management, whereby turf variability is actively managed, optimises chemical applications and reduces environmental contamination.

2. Drainage construction

Drainage can play an important part in maintaining and improving the turfgrass sward. Turfgrass drainage can be a difficult and complex task, relying on many factors including engineering and environmental parameters, drainage theories and knowledge of the turfgrass industry.

GIS can create simulation models of drainage flows, calculating ideal drainage positions. Storm or flood modelling can also be carried out, aiding drainage decisions.

3. Environmental variables can be combined to understand:

- Species distribution
- Climate
- Habitat factors
- Soils

Spatial variations in soil properties, habitat existence, wetland areas and overall geology of a site affects construction of a new course and alteration tasks on existing ones.

4. Water use can vary widely depending on climate, course design and management practices among others.

5. Modelling weed emergence, using historical weather and biological data to create maps for their prediction. GIS models can be created to predict future happenings to help plan management decisions.

6. Habitat selection

Environmental patterns can be studied and correlations between, for example, vegetation and communities, can be described and delineated to capture the requirements of particular species habitats.

7. Wetland and corridor creation

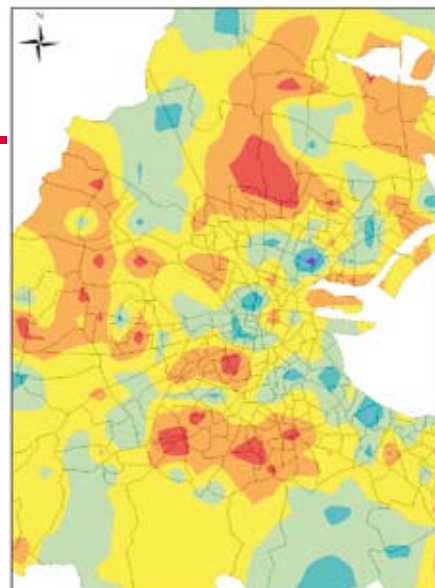
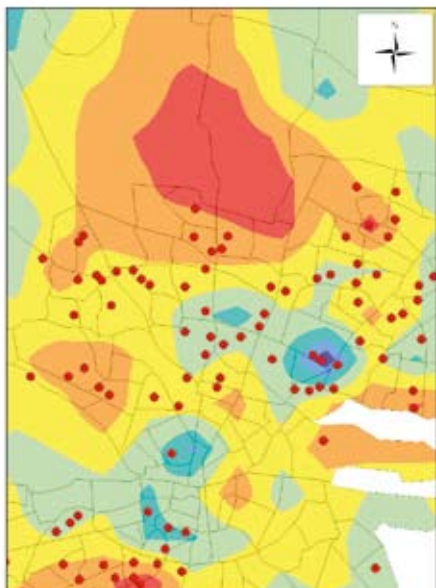
GIS is useful for potential landscape visualisations – testing to see if a potential plan will look natural in the surrounding landscape.

8. Landscape assessment

- Map planning issues – development analysis.
- Aid site selection – water body, woodland areas, etc.

9. Monitoring rainfall and temperatures

Monitoring and documenting climate and micro-climate characteristics can aid course managers and greenkeepers to enhance or alter their management practices and decision-making on a course.



GIS has infinite benefits including:

- Increased efficiency
- Organise day-to-day functioning of course tasks
- Plan new features
- Evaluate the course
- Aid in more precise management over chemicals and irrigation, leading to efficient maintenance costs and environmental benefits.

GIS can be used for producing high-quality maps of vegetation/landcover, habitats, soil types, drainage patterns and so on. These maps can then be used to provide information for course assessment, management and conservation tasks.

GIS software is becoming more user-friendly with the technology becoming quick and effective, allowing for virtual reality models and interactive tools to be created.

Precision management

GIS technologies can offer the potential to reduce costs, optimise resources and outputs on the course. Precision work means there will be minimal waste or excess product applications to unwanted areas.

Precision turf management observes, documents, maps and manages golf courses on the smallest reasonable scale to provide optimum performance for the entire golf course environment with the minimum input resources. Characterising and documenting the site in terms of soil type, plants, slopes, out-of-play areas, waterbodies, paths and such like is a major first and useful step in precision management.

Many courses are now using sophisticated geographic information systems to track maintenance resources and bring more precision to their use of resources. Even sensors on mowers can be used for mapping, data collection and diagnostics.

GIS technologies for precision management include:

- Adjustable sprinkler trajectories
- Subsurface irrigation drips
- Tailoring water distribution technologies to suit different microclimates
- Soil moisture measurement tools.

Analysing with GIS

The accuracy of an output to be analysed from a GIS depends on the accuracy or quality of the input data. The 'tools' and 'help' functions available on most GIS systems provide self-help problem-solving and how to go about optimising use of the system.

GPS recording is very useful – it gives an overall summary of the site that can be processed into visual, easy-to-interpret maps and statistical analysis. The results can be visually displayed and analysed, allowing increased interpretation of data.

Progress with GIS

GIS has historically been associated with high-cost software and hardware products, along with difficult usability. But this is changing rapidly. Cheaper, more readily-available products are being introduced quite regularly. Also many clubs are seeing the benefits of this management device and are more willing to spend the money.

Using GIS

Appropriate systems depend on:

- Who is using the technology
- Level of expertise
- Level of experience
- Level of knowledge
- How sophisticated a system is needed
- Finance

It is probably wise to phase-in the use of GIS to a course and start with a simple base map or palette to work from. Having a digital map of the course can prove to be very useful for its optimal management and therefore aid better decision-making. The use of GIS will likely increase in the future in turfgrass management, as a means of having a deeper understanding of the entire course.

And as pressure mounts on turf managers to reduce nutrient inputs, GIS will likely be a huge aid in managing all inputs while maintaining, if not also increasing, the quality of the course. In the future GIS will likely be used to scrutinise every aspect of the course as a means of enhancing its play and feel.

About the author

Mary Purcell is currently carrying out research for a doctorate degree, specialising in Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and Environmental Science, at University College Dublin, in the School of Architecture, Landscape and Civil Engineering. Contact Mary at mary.purcell@ucd.ie

TORO

Count on it.



FRIENDLY NEIGHBOURS

Scott MacCallum speaks with Archie Dunn who has the task of maintaining a golf course next door to some very illustrious neighbours

When I mentioned that I was going up to Auchterarder it was immediately assumed that I'd be visiting Gleneagles and not the excellent members' club which is the wonderful resort's direct neighbour.

"That's the 15th hole of the PGA Course," said Auchterarder's Course Manager, Archie Dunn, as we stood on the corner of his course looking over a very small fence at a greenkeeper cutting the green just a few yards away.

With the PGA Course the venue for the 2014 Ryder Cup Archie is looking forward to having a much sought after view of proceedings without having to leave his own workplace.

"The Ryder Cup is a major opportunity for the area, not just for Gleneagles, and if Auchterarder Golf Club can't make progress that year there would be something far wrong," said that man who started his greenkeeping career as a 16 year-old at Gleneagles and rose to be the Head man on the wonderful King's Course.

Archie has a close relationship with Scott Fenwick, Gleneagles' Courses Manager, having worked alongside him for many years, but that relationship is sometimes stretched when staff move from Auchterarder to its illustrious neighbour.

"He's taken a lot of my staff in recent years. He does apologise occasionally..."



but not very often," laughed Archie. "There is not a lot we can do about it as it's progress for the young guys and everyone who has gone to Gleneagles from here has done very well so I feel that it's a credit to the way I've trained them. They get the opportunity to learn the basics here, so they have an all round knowledge when they leave here. But it does mean that we have quite a turn over of staff," explained Archie, who pointed out pictures of Sean Connery, Lee Trevino and Peter Alliss from a visit they made during the old Pro Celebrity Golf series in the '70s and '80s.

The conventional neighbouring club mutual back scratching does go on between Auchterarder and Gleneagles with machinery swapping on a regular basis.

"They borrow as much from me as I do from them, particularly if they have the same job being carried out on all three golf course at similar times."

Despite have the shadow of one of the world's most attractive golfing destinations hanging over it Auchterarder Golf Club shines extremely brightly



A Gleneagles greenkeeper cuts the 15th green on the PGA course, just a few yards away

in its own right. Last year the club came third in a Scotsman newspaper poll for Best Value Golf behind Lanark GC and Boat of Garten GC for the quality and affordability of what is on offer.

“We didn’t enter a visitor must have put us forward but we got some superb publicity in the Scotsman just the week before The Open at Carnoustie.”

And it would be hard to argue with the poll. Auchterarder, at one end of a town known as the Lang Toon as it’s the longest town in Scotland, has 850 members with all gents and ladies paying £340 a year subs while visitors pay £27.50 a round during the week £33 at weekends - £39 and £50 respectively for day tickets.

“We brought in well over £100,000 in visitors fees last year and with medals on Sunday’s and Wednesdays, ladies’ medals on Tuesdays, and juniors playing two evenings a week, it does get busy,” said Archie, who still finds time to act as Scotland’s BIGGA Board of Management representative.

With that sort of drive the club has moved forward on all fronts with improvements to the clubhouse – a first floor function room complete with balcony looking out at some of the finest scenery money can’t buy – recently opened while on the course major changes have and are continuing to be made.

The original nine holes were built in 1892 with a second nine being added around 30 years ago after the club leased land from the council.

“The second nine was designed by the then Gleneagles pro, Ian Marchbank, and built for around £50,000. The layout works pretty well but we’ve spent a lot of money over the last 10 years improving areas, as you only get so much for your money and the £50,000 didn’t stretch to quality construction. However, it was all that could be afforded at the time and it moved the club forward.”

The improvements have included 12 major tee reconstructions – doubling them in size and including two double tees for the 3rd and 9th (completed but not yet in play) and the 12th and 13th.

They have also reconstructed three new greens in the last six years with pride of place going to the 12th.

“It was the third green we rebuilt after the 7th and 8th and it was probably the most problematic on the golf course. It was in a wet heavily wooded

clay area, was disease prone and always the first to close the course when it rained,” explained Archie, who explained that everything except draining work, which is contracted out because they don’t have the equipment, is done in-house by the five man team including himself.

“We increased the size of the 12th threefold, added some undulations, put in three new bunkers and a 500 square metre pond, which has totally rejuvenated the whole area. It is now the feature hole of the course and the feedback we’ve had from members is very positive.”

The difficulty of attacking a major project like a new green is that all the other day-to-day work must continue and it can stretch the length of time taken to complete the work.

“It took us three months to complete but it all depends on the weather and how quickly we can start. Nowadays you can still be cutting well into November. With construction work you have to make sacrifices and sometimes we don’t rake the bunkers every day during the week to allow us to get on.”

Weekend bunker raking is carried out by members of the Junior Section and Archie has already employed... and subsequently lost to Gleneagles, three members who discovered a love of greenkeeping through this route.

The green was out of play from the first week in November until the first week in May but the speed of re-introduction owes much to another hands across the fence alliance between Auchterarder and Gleneagles.

“We were very fortunate that Gleneagles were lifting the 14th green on the PGA course and that’s where our turf came from. We paid the going rate for it but it meant we had turf that was green height and it probably saved us six to eight weeks because our putting surface was established a lot quicker,” said Archie, who is hoping the arrangement might be repeated when they tackle the two remaining greens on the list to be rebuilt.

With the construction side moving forward on an on-going basis the environmental work on the course is also making real progress.

“We have a five year plan, in conjunction with Elspeth Coutts, of Green Progress, for our environmental management work and at the moment we are doing heather regeneration and scrub clearance.

“Some of the heather had been 25-30 years old and had become very leggy

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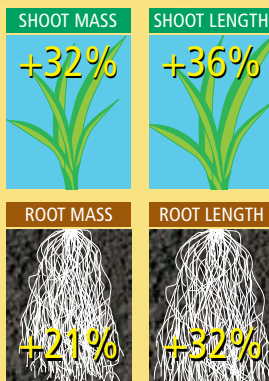
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and totally unplayable – it was 18 inches to two feet high on some of the playing areas with gorse around eight feet,” explained Archie.

“We had hoped to get started a lot earlier but the weather was against us over the winter so it was only recently that we were able to bring in a two metre flail mower. We are still to rake off the debris to see what is left and whether we will have to scarify and vertidrain to reproduce the heather bed.

“The whole course features a lot of heather and I do expect to get a bit of criticism from members for stripping it out but as Jimmy Kidd once said to me, ‘You’ve got to crack an egg to make an omlette’.”

When Archie arrived at the club he began a policy of adding definition to the fairways and leaving out-of-play areas to develop naturally.

“It has softened the whole landscape down and is much more pleasing to the eye. It’s given us less grass to cut, we’ve been able to transplant saplings to other areas of the course and the wildlife we see out of the course has increased in number.”

The club has red squirrel postcards in the clubhouse which are sent to the Perthshire Red Squirrel Group when one is spotted, while there are also buzzards, herons and deer on regular display. The club has also applied permission for a rope to be extended across the busy road outside the course which will give safe passage from one side to the other and let them display their daredevil high wire skills.

Archie is always very keen to try new ideas when it comes to course management and is currently investigating the purchase of a set of rollers which he would use to reduce the number of occasions the greens are cut.

“Over the last few years some guys have saved up to 30% of cutting and still produced a surface. I know of guys who are rolling three times a week instead of cutting and it enables them to raise the height of cut by a mil.

Instead of cutting seven times a week you are cutting four and rolling in between. It doesn’t compact the surface too much and reduces the stress on the grass plant. It’s an idea I started to hear about 18 months ago and I like to try new things and perhaps take a chance occasionally.”

Another example of this is his use of Primo Maxx on his greens.

“I used it on the tees last year and got some good results and decided to use it on the greens. It is an expensive tool but you have got to weigh up what you are saving on cutting as a small labour force. I think you need to practise with it, particularly on timings of applications and the grass plant must be strong before you apply it because you get no regrowth after you’ve sprayed it. What you’ve got is what you’ve got.”

Archie is a progressive greenkeeper at a progressive golf club and the results achieved have been impressive in keeping up with the Jones’ next door.



The results of scrub clearance on the 1st



The view of the 12th green and pond



TRACTOR TALK

Lots of models but do you really have much choice? James de Havilland takes a look at our options

If you are after a compact tractor in the sub-45hp power bracket, you may think you are spoilt for choice - there are now more than 20 compact tractor suppliers in the UK. Concentrate on what a tractor's transmission offers and it emerges that you may not have as much choice as you think.

Not so long ago, a key job for a tractor would have been to drag a gang mower up and down the fairways. It is all too easy to forget that gangs were and, for some still remain, the key large-area mowing tool on the golf course. Now that has changed, the role of a tractor has also altered, with the operation of top dressing and aeration equipment forming the primary on-course role for most new tractor buys.

There are then the compact tractors that are purchased with general purpose mowing forming their primary role. A more versatile tool than a dedicated ride-on mower, a tractor with a mid-mounted mower can be fitted with a front end loader, be used to pull a trailer and carry out a range of other tasks using its rear lift linkage.

With apologies to those who can guess where this is going, a sweeping generalisation now follows. Most tractors selected for general on- (and off-) course duties will have a mechanical transmission. A tractor purchased for 'ride-on' mowing is more likely to have a hydrostatic transmission. That is not to say that the roles cannot be reversed, but the reason why this pattern tends to be followed is simple.

With a mechanical transmission, once the best gear ratio and engine speed to match a specific job has been determined, it can be easily repeated. Anyone using a specific bit of kit can be told, for example, to 'select mid-range, gear 2, a 540 PTO speed and 1,900 engine rpm' and it can be pretty much assumed that the operator will then run the tractor at a forward and PTO speed to match the implement and task.

With hydrostatic drive, the same job can be more complicated. At a fixed engine speed, the amount by which the hydrostatic pedal is depressed determines forward speed. There is absolutely no reason why the tractor cannot be operated at a fixed forward speed with hydrostatic drive, it just takes the right operator firstly to know when the correct speed for the job has been achieved and then maintain it. Every time the speed is changed, during a turn for example, the operator has to revert back to the right speed again.

Hydrostatic cruise control can of course help, but there are occasions when the system will alter the forward speed to accommodate a change in load on the tractor. So although hydrostatic drive has its advantages, it is not always the optimum choice for fixed speed work.

For most courses, a 3x9 or 12x12 mechanical transmission will be up to the job, provided you get a forward speed of 0.5 kph for low creep speed jobs at rated speed. It may be possible to specify extra creep speeds that allow a the right mix of speeds to suit, but this will be down to the tractor



Forward speed can be absolutely critical for some jobs, so it is important to choose a tractor with the ability to deliver the right pace at rated PTO speeds. Equipment manufacturers can often suggest a good tractor for the job.



The dual range hydrostatic 23hp Iseki TXG23 from Ransomes Jacobsen just shows how much you can do with a modern compact; a detachable front loader can be fitted with the front linkage still attached.

FEATURE



MF 1547 with Dyna QPS transmission is ideal for course operations such as deep-tine aeration, mowing, trailer hauling and front loader work.



Developing 29hp, the Iseki TH4290 is another hydrostatic drive model that can readily specified with a mid-mount deck. Hydrostatic transmissions are ideal for mowing work.



(MF Dyna QPS dash)
MF tractors with Dyna QPS transmission have an enhanced dash panel with combined digital/analog read-out.



(JD Power Reverser)
A shuttle forward and reverse lever makes changing direction much faster and is recommended for front loader work. The Power Reverser power shuttle on John Deere tractors allows the shift back and forth to be made without using the clutch.



Developing 44hp, the John Deere 3720 has an easy to use hydrostatic transmission. A tractor of this type can be used with fixed speed kit, but a manual shift is often the preferred choice for this type of work.

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NEW

make, model and possibly transmission options selected. It pays to have a speed that will go a bit lower than is normally required to allow for a degree of flexibility

Next up is synchromesh. It tends to be assumed that most modern mechanical transmission tractors will have synchromesh as standard. This is not necessarily the case, simple 'crash' boxes still coming as part of the standard package on many sub-40hp tractor models.

Following on from this is whether a forward/reverse shuttle is offered. These allow the tractor to typically switch between a speed-matched forward and reverse ratio using a shuttle simple lever and the clutch pedal. A power shuttle will do the same, but electro-hydraulics take over the de-clutching to allow the shuttle lever to be used on its own. This can help speed manoeuvring and is a real plus when using a front loader.

Sticking with mechanical transmissions, there are models that offer a mechanical 'splitter'. This essentially allows the speeds of the selected ratio to be reduced by perhaps 15 to 20%. This can be useful when working a machine in changing conditions, but may not be a feature that will be of great value on a golf course. The exception may be when a desired ratio proves just a little too fast when doing the same job but at different times of the year; the selected ratio is fine when working in normal or damp conditions but the split ratio may be the right speed when it is really dry.

With hydrostatic drive, matters are typically less complex. Most professional compact tractor models will offer two- or three-ranges, these essentially allowing the speed to be varied between say 0-15kph, 0-20kph or 0-25kph, the lower ratio offering more flexibility when operating at lower speeds. For mowing, a hydrostatic drive is widely accepted as the best bet for varied conditions, the easy ability to slow the machine without reducing the engine or PTO speed having obvious advantages.

One alternative to simple mechanical and full hydrostatic transmissions is Massey Ferguson's Dyna QPS transmission. Available as an option on

its MF 1533 (32 DIN hp), MF 1540 (38 DIN hp) and MF 1547 (46 DIN hp) compact tractor models, the 12x12 transmission incorporates both Power Shuttle and Power Shift.

The Power Shift function enables clutchless change-on-the-move in each of the gearbox's three ranges. All the operator has to do is change up or down the four speeds within the range using switches mounted on the side of the range-change lever. This can be really handy when there is a need to increase or decrease the working speed without having to lose momentum to change gear. This level of mechanical transmission sophistication is rare in the sub-45hp sector.

With a number of 'entry level' compacts now arriving in the UK, it may be tempting to go for something with a low sticker price. In terms of what a tractor will do, some of the 'cheap and cheerful' offerings are actually not a bad investment. The problem can be that these tractors often do not have the refinements that many users now take for granted. These can include heavier than expected operating controls, a reluctance to shift gears, particularly when cold, front-driven axles with differentials that can prove a bit 'sticky', this in turn leading to tyre scrub in a tight turn and less than wonderful rear lift or oil flow and pressure capacity.

More important is the spread of available speeds with a manual transmission. If you cannot match the tractor to the jobs you need it to do, it follows the tractor is not the right one, regardless of how much was saved by buying it over a 'premium' tractor brand. You get what you pay for.

As always, the best thing to do is to take your time choosing the tractor you need and specifying the right transmission for the job. By the time a set of nice turf friendly tyres are fitted, even a cheap tractor can start to look expensive.

As a tractor will have to earn its keep over perhaps ten years or more, it is well worth holding out not just for the right transmission spec but also for what you want in terms of comfort, ease of operation and good local support.





STUDENT LIFE: CAREER PROGRESSION

As part of GI's student-based series of articles, Melissa Jones paid a visit to Myerscough College, just outside Preston

After a rather windy journey along the M62, making my way to Bilsborrow, I was greeted by the cheery face of Stewart Brown, Team Leader for Sportsturf at Myerscough College. With a history of grounds management and teaching, Stewart actually studied at Myerscough in the early 80s when, as he puts it "sportsturf education" was pioneered by such lecturers as, Martyn Jones, and John Hacker.



With the growing popularity of both amateur and professional sport, turf management has now become big business and Stewart, whose first teaching job took him to Otley College in Suffolk, then on to Writtle, and eventually to Myerscough in 2006, was keen to open my eyes to the facilities that the college has to offer.

The college, with 10 dedicated sportsturf members of staff, offers a range of sportsturf qualifications from further to higher education. Available as either full or part time options are: Level 1 Introductory Diploma in Sportsturf; Level 2 National Certificate in Sportsturf and a Level 3 National Diploma. Offering the option of online study too are the Foundation Degree Sportsturf; BSc Hons Turfgrass Science; and new for 2008 is the Foundation Degree in Sportsturf and Golf Course Management, a course of which Stewart seems particularly proud.

"We have over 300 students studying sportsturf and the bulk of them want to be golf greenkeepers, we've recognised this and come up with

a course that links sportsturf with golf course management, providing aspiring course managers with human resource, event management and marketing skills."

The Foundation Degree in Sportsturf and Golf Course Management has been designed to enable students to achieve a higher education qualification, with a practical focus specifically for those who want to pursue a career in golf course management. It has been developed in partnership with industry experts and is an ideal choice of qualification for people already working in the industry, as well as those without experience hoping to start a career in Sportsturf and Golf Course Management.

All students will gain the relevant practical and technical skills needed for positions of responsibility. Subjects studied include golf course design and management, cultural practices in sportsturf, construction irrigation and drainage, golf club operations, human resource management and business planning.

The acquisition of practical skills and experience is an integral part of the Foundation Degree course. Full-time students can undertake periods of industry experience at a range of prestigious golf clubs in addition to the option of taking a 12-month paid work placement should you wish to further develop your skills.

Myerscough's sportsturf courses are designed to equip you with the necessary skills to build, maintain and manage quality surfaces to high specification standards. Students learn the science behind how grasses grow, as well as soils, rootzones, drainage and a wide range of cultural maintenance practices. You will gain an understanding of the demands of sport and what players need or expect from turf surfaces. You will also be taught how to provide these conditions all year round and in all weather conditions.



Work-based courses have become another viable option for greenkeepers already working at a club. Greenkeepers nationwide are able to study for NVQ 2, 3 and 4 from home keeping in contact with the course assessors. Training is designed for employees in the sportsturf industry who wish to gain competence in their operations and a gain a broad understanding of sportsturf operations as well as technical updating.

The "BSc Hons Turfgrass Science is the only degree in Europe you can study completely online," claims Stewart.

"Our online provision has proved to be a big success story so far and is the leading provision of its type today in the UK and Europe. It has been particularly suitable for those in the industry that have come up through NVQ 2 and 3 who then find they want to do something at a higher level. This is particularly true for The FdSc Sportsturf course which is also available completely online.

"We currently have in excess of 100 students from such places as Spain, Japan, Scotland and Ireland studying online. The courses are completed in much the same way as Open University, with correspondence being via email, post etc."

The college itself is set in 600 hectares of open, green surroundings and boasts a 9-hole golf course, putting green, driving range, pro shop and eight winter sports pitches. "The golf course and pitches are first and foremost used as a practical resource to help students develop their skills, but they also bring in funding with the course having over 400 members and pitches raising money through hire," explained Stewart.

The college provides a wide range of maintenance equipment and tools and students get the chance to operate sophisticated machinery and equipment and to develop the practical skills needed to maintain, present and repair sportsturf surfaces.

"We work closely with Ransomes Jacobsen, Kubota, and most recently Bernhard's & Co. The companies teach us about their machinery and provide us with the latest kit – an invaluable teaching resource - and in return, we are working on providing agronomy training for their sales reps, with the hope that they will start in July," Stewart informed me.

The last piece of the puzzle as far as equipment goes for Myerscough, is a new irrigation system. Stewart is looking into setting this up at present.

The most popular team and individual sports played outside today involve the use of turf or grass surfaces. There are fantastic opportunities both in the UK and overseas for people who are trained and qualified in sportsturf. Careers exist at all levels, from assistant groundspersons and greenkeepers to managers of international sports facilities such as Premiership Football Clubs and major elite Golf Courses.

For more information on courses at Myerscough College and how to apply call: 01995 642211 email: enquiries@myerscough.ac.uk or visit: www.myerscough.ac.uk

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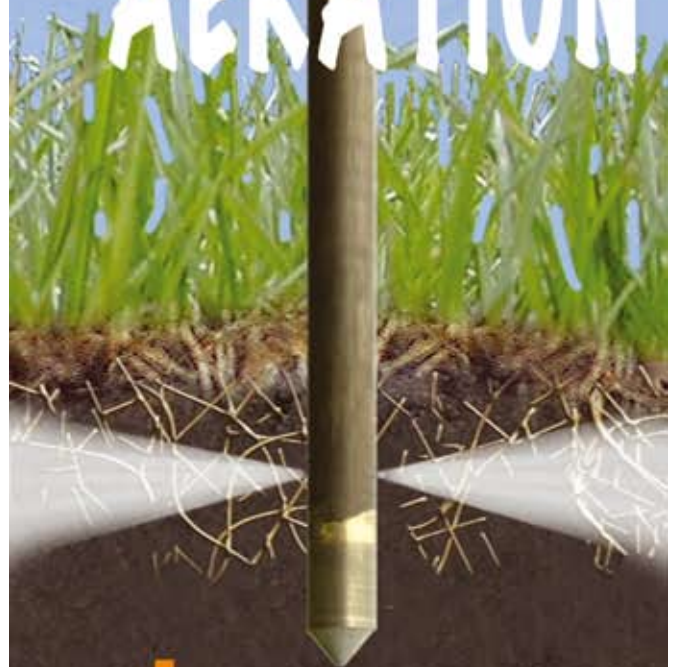
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IT CAN BE DONE!

In a series of articles following the development of a new golf course, currently under construction in the South East of England, Peter Jones looks at the decision making processes involved in getting a new golf course established, so that it has every possible chance of being a financial success.

When the R&A produced its “Demand for Golf” document in the mid ‘80s and suggested that hundreds of new golf courses were needed in the UK to satisfy demand, the floodgates opened and dozens of new golf courses sprung up all around the country. It was a boom time for new jobs in Greenkeeping, and also for sales companies, but many of the hopeful entrepreneurs that had taken the plunge to move into the golf business, had to sit back and face the grim realisation that the initial targets had been and overly optimistic and too generalised, and there simply weren’t enough golfers to go round.

Many of the new golf clubs went on the market and some were bought and sold once, twice and even three times before owners could turn the business into a going concern. The impact on many of the greenkeepers employed on these courses was often a tightening of the purse strings, as prudent owners attempted to make the clubs viable.

So who in their right mind would consider developing a new golf course today, especially around the M25 corridor, where golf courses are already in abundance?

And if there were such people, what sort of golf course would they choose to build? A Pay & Play? A Private members course? A 6-hole, a 9-hole, or an 18 hole course?

A long course? A short course? A simple course with plain, natural features, or a dramatic course with man-made lakes, eye-catching mounds and bunkers?

If you, (the Greenkeeper) were a stakeholder of the business, and involved in the decision making process, what decisions would you try to influence to make the course a success in financial terms?

Would you want a lot of staff and very high standards of presentation? Or would you choose fewer staff, safe in the knowledge that their jobs would be “safe”?

How about your choice of grasses on the greens, tees, fairways, and roughs? Would you choose Bentgrass on the greens? If so, would it be Creeping Bent? Colonial Bent? Velvet Bent? Some may even consider dwarf Ryegrass; – would you?

If fairway irrigation was not a financial option, would you choose ryegrass on the fairways to help cope with wear?

Or would you be determined to choose a seed mixture that suited the natural environment and natural soil in textbook fashion, irrespective of what its performance characteristics?

And when came to working out your maintenance regime, what would be your recommendation be to streamline your costs for the future success of the business? Long rough, or no rough between fairways? Semi-rough or not? Fast greens (8’6” for regular play) or Medium pace greens? (6’6” for regular play). One hole cup on the green, moved three times a week? Or two hole cups on the green, moved twice a week?

All these factors and many, many more are open for discussion when embarking on a new golf course project, and the decisions that are made could make all the difference in the world to the cost of maintaining the course, and whether the golfer enjoys their game of golf.

Over the next few months, a series of articles will follow the development of Clandon Park Golf Club, a new Pay & Play course under construction near Guildford, and sandwiched in between two other existing 18 hole courses, one of which is just the other side of the fence.



The site of the 1st green, which was arable farmland.

It is of course possible that this may be one of the last ever new courses to be built in the South East, (with the exception of those linked to new housing developments) and it will therefore be interesting to see how it fairs commercially, and what it will have to offer golfers in terms of fun on the golf course, and value for money.

Planning permission for the course was approved several years ago, but it is only last year that the planning conditions were signed off and the project was given the go-ahead.

A total ban on the felling of trees on part of the site which was originally earmarked for the course meant that another piece of adjoining land had to be utilised instead. An old flint & chalk quarry was therefore taken into the curtilage of the site to provide sufficient acreage for the course, and with it came a string of environmental issues and what seemed like a mountain of paperwork was required by the Local Borough Council that must have taken the felling of a small rainforest to provide the paper they needed.



Quarry floor – Protected area. Home of the Cudweed – Globally endangered plant



Tree protection fences and Ivy covering trees

The Quarry

The inclusion of the Quarry area into the golf course allowed two holes to be designed providing interesting and unique views of the flint seams in the Quarry face and the chalk floor, plus the opportunity to have a tee shot which plays over a nine metre high sheer face to an elevated fairway landing area in the middle of the quarry. The majority of the quarry, including the sheer faces, was found to be colonised by butterfly bushes (*Buddleia* spp.) providing cover for resident rabbits and deer, and an embankment on the south facing edge of the quarry was found to be the home to Badgers with a fairly extensive sett with five entrance holes. No work would be permitted near here either.

The floor of the Quarry was also found to be the home to the Broad-leaved cudweed (*Filago pyramidata*) a globally threatened/declining plant categorised as 'Endangered'. Large areas of the quarry floor were deemed as Protected Areas, and no work would be permitted near here.

The local 'Bat man' was deployed to visit the site and carry out a bat survey on the trees before work could start. No bats were detected, but an instruction was given that work must stop if a bat was found to be roosting behind the ivy on the trees earmarked for felling.

Protection of existing trees during the construction phase was a prerequisite which involved several kilometres of protective fencing to be erected before a start could be made on site.

Closer inspection of the trees found that some had decayed inside, and these were felled. A question as to whether the Ivy was to blame for the condition of the trees was asked, and remains open for debate.

Last but not least, the local archaeology 'Time-team' were deployed to check the site for traces of ancient activity and valuable artifacts. It was determined by another local authority department that topsoil would be removed from test strips amounting to no more than 4% of the site, and an estimate of some £7,500 was budgeted for to carry out the work. The final bill exceeded £50k, which is possibly another reason why there may not be any new golf courses built around the Guildford area in the future.

In the next issue, the article will look at the decisions made in relation to the design, agronomy, and future maintenance objectives for the course to help ensure the financial success of the project.

These will include: The construction budget, maintenance budget, choice of grasses, ease and speed of play, ease of maintenance, the Quarry, landscape design, soil type, flora & fauna, & conservation requirements



Archaeology investigations

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WHAT'S YOUR NUMBER?

Name: Peter Jones
Position: Principal Consultant
Company: PJA Ltd – Golf Course
Consultants & Agronomists

How long have you been in the industry?

"I've been in consultancy for 14 years, but started in the golf industry about 30 years ago."

How did you get into it?

"Acting as a consultant to clubs was part of my job when I worked for a Plc golf course development company. When the company went bankrupt, I was spurred on to get my own course consultancy business going, and I bolstered my academic credentials with a MSc. degree, with the support of the Ransomes Jacobsen Scholarship scheme."

What other jobs have you done?

"I was manager of design & maintenance for the development company, I was a Course Manager for seven years, I also spent 12 years at Woburn GC. When I first started my own business I supplemented my income by landscaping peoples gardens and working part time as a liaison officer for the GTC."

What do you like about your current job?

"Giving advice, analysing problems, and the sense of team accomplishment when things work out well. I have a fascination for drainage problems (sadly). Visiting a variety of courses is also very rewarding – it's interesting to compare them at different times of the year."

What changes have you seen during your time in the industry?

"Improved mechanisation has helped to improve efficiency. The introduction of the Verti-drain type aerators has had a huge impact on golf courses, and now there are better top dressers, precision scarifiers, etc, which all do the job more efficiently. Staff welfare and Health & Safety has also improved tremendously."

What do you like to do in your spare time?

"Our twin boys keep my wife and I busy at weekends driving them to mountain biking competitions. When time allows you will find me at peace with the world in my garage with an angle grinder and spanners building a replica Jag SS100."

Where do you see yourself in 10 years time?

"In my garage, still working on the car."

Who do you consider to be your best friends in the industry?

"This is a great industry for meeting people and making friends. There are probably too many to mention, but I would like to mention Andy Cole for his encouragement when I started out in business."

What do you consider to be your lucky number?

"6."

Pick a number

"42."



Peter has picked Victor Jamieson from Rainbird



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MORE EFFECTIVE OVERSEEDING

Miranda Harris offers some help when it comes to making overseeding decisions

Greenkeepers are under pressure from all sides; players who want to play all year round on fast greens and perfect tees; unpredictable and at times extreme climate; not forgetting the restricted use of water and chemicals as sustainable, ecological considerations become more relevant. Therefore practical management systems like overseeding, where new grass is introduced into the sward from seed could be a long term investment for any golf course.

Overseeding not only replaces grasses which are not renewed by natural regeneration, but offers the opportunity to introduce high performance grasses into the sward. The latest genetic improvements can be included which take advantage of the huge investment in research and development. Overseeding helps to maintain a diverse and balanced sward, reducing the invasion of unwanted grasses and weeds.

As the use of nitrogen, water and chemical inputs becomes more of an issue, overseeding can offer a sustainable management solution resulting in improved disease resistance as well as drought resistance and less need for fertiliser and chemical inputs.

The definition of sustainability in relation to golf course development and management, as stated by the R & A is, "optimising the playing quality of the golf course in harmony with the conservation of its natural environment under economically sound and socially responsible management". Overseeding definitely fits the bill.

Overseeding as part of renovation

Trials carried out by STRI in 2005 demonstrated that overseeding is an important part of any renovation programme in order to aid recovery after wear. The trials showed that the unseeded control failed to reach acceptable standards compared to the various treatments which had been overseeded. Interestingly enough, overall variation among seed rates (which varied from 12.5gm² - 100gm²) was markedly less than the difference observed between the overseeding treatments and the unseeded control.

How often

How often one should overseed depends on where. The optimum for fairways is annually but every 3 years is the absolute minimum, totalling 6 holes every year. Tees would be as soon as the tee master has been removed, whereas greens need to be oversown at least in the spring and autumn but ideally every month through the growing season. Remember that poa will seed daily between March and September and overseeding will reduce invasion of these unwanted grasses.

Overseeding Fairways

With much time and effort spent on the tees and greens, overseeding fairways can be overlooked and left to recover from wear and tear unaided. However with careful selection of effective grass seed mixtures and remedial

work, fairways will improve in the short term and exhibit greater resilience in future years.

The species choice must be matched with the character of the course and the practicality of successful establishment. The timing of the seeding operation and the method of application will have huge bearing on the outcome.

The backbone of most fairway mixtures utilises the fine fescue range including strong creeping red fescue, slender creeping red fescue and chewings fescue. Combinations of the latter two fescue establish rapidly compared to bent grass. This is primarily because of their larger seed size. Strong creeping red fescue tends to establish the fastest and produces rhizomes. Therefore it is useful in providing initial establishment and consolidating new areas while slower establishing grasses develop. If mowing heights are very close (below 10mm) then strong creeping red fescue will tend to lose ground cover.

Chewings fescue and slender creeping red fescue provide fineness of leaf and high shoot density. Slender creeping red fescue provides some resilience with rhizomatous growth and is quite drought tolerant.

A species worthy of consideration in freer draining low nutrient soils is sheep's fescue. The new turf type cultivars can withstand very close mowing and retain a deep green colour throughout the seasons, as well as being fine leaved. See picture of Quatro, sheep's fescue (below.)



Smooth stalked meadow grass is often included in fairway mixtures for wear tolerance even in close mown turf. It is important to recognise the limitations of smooth stalked meadow grass, unless the seed has been primed, as it will require relatively high ground temperatures to establish. It is also more suited to freer draining soils.

Bent grasses are useful in providing a dense base to the sward. The establishment of bent as with the smooth stalked meadow grasses can be slow and unpredictable due to their small seed size, requiring relatively high soil temperatures to germinate. The finer leaved bents will offer better disease resistance.

Overseeding Greens

As with fairways, the choice of species for overseeding greens is very wide with the final decision depending largely on the characteristics of the root zone and the environmental pressures both natural and imposed.

Many older greens are predominantly populated by bent grass and annual meadow grass. Recently constructed courses may have combinations of fescue and bent with small amounts of annual meadow grass. Finally we have the few courses with fescue dominated greens.

The characteristics of a green will to a large degree dictate the success or failure of establishing new grasses. Poor drainage, very low cutting heights and heavy use will not favour the latter. It is very important to recognise the need to improve the conditions within a green if seeding is to be successful. It is also important to recognise limitations of grasses within a green if very low cutting heights are imposed.

Once again the fine fescue range offer tremendous advantages; as well as high shoot density, they have low input requirements and relatively consistent growth patterns. They do not fair well in wet, heavier greens or under very low mowing heights (below 4mm). Fescues also benefit from less surface disturbance and regular light top dressings.

Traditional mixtures usually comprise fescue and bent in combination. It is fair to say that more greenkeepers are using pure bent and pure fescue mixtures for overseeding. Thanks to a growing environmental awareness and the R & A's vision of sustainable golf, interest in using red fescue for greens has increased significantly.

Overseeding Tees

Tees mixtures vary dramatically and choosing mixtures can be daunting. The choice of actual species and varieties will be heavily influenced by the tee usage and maintenance inputs.

Many courses now use modern fine leaved amenity ryegrasses simply to achieve quick establishment and high wear tolerance. Typically it is favoured in inland parkland courses.

The use of ryegrass however comes with the added burden of higher fertiliser input and increased mowing frequencies. The decision will depend on the existing sward composition and the tees usage.

As discussed earlier, chewings fescue and slender creeping red fescue provide high shoot density, require low fertiliser input and reduce mowing frequencies. Strong creeping red fescue provides relatively quick establishment and extensive rhizomatous growth. Bent grass forms a good base to the sward and can spread by rhizomes or stolons.

Smooth stalked meadow grass is very wear tolerant at low mowing heights and provides a good network of rhizomes. It also recovers well from wear damage. The main disadvantage of this species is slow germination and maturation time. As mentioned before, the introduction of primed seed may go some way to alleviate this.

How to overseed

As part of the preparation for overseeding it is necessary to create gaps in the existing sward to give seedlings a chance to compete and ensure the seed is in contact with the rootzone. This can be achieved through verticutting,



scarifying or aeration, or may form part of the role of the equipment chosen for the actual task of introducing the seed. Larger areas such as fairways may require a direct drill approach as seen at The Royal Lytham Golf Club (see photo). If carrying out small repairs such as divoting ensure seed is not incorporated too deeply and that sufficient moisture is available. Specialist greens seeders are now available with high accuracy of sowing depth and application rates.

Seed can be applied to the greens during regular coring work as long as the seed is brushed into the cores in the final dressing. This has the added benefit of providing a good depth of root zone below the seed. Surface scarification and top dressing can be utilised applying the seed within the top dressing.

For best results, overseed in good growing weather and relax operations which are likely to cause stress to emerging seedlings, e.g. top dressing, verticutting or close mowing. Overseeding to improve turf quality may well require the implementation of a programme of treatments. It will also be necessary to adapt the maintenance regime to suit the sown species, should this differ from that implemented to the original sward.

Whatever choice you make it is very important to recognise the maintenance requirements of these grasses and choose highly rated seed varieties if overseeding is to be successful.

Remember, this is a long term investment with both financial and environmental benefits.

For further information about overseeding and the choice of varieties from DLF Trifolium Ltd, please see www.dlf.co.uk/amenityseed/johnsonssportseed

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J Fescue – pure fescue mixture for greens

Teemaster – Perennial ryegrass and fescue mixture for tees

J4 – pure fescue mixture includes Quatro, Sheeps fescue for fairways

Miranda Harris is Marketing and Communications Manager for DLF Trifolium with technical support from John Hughes, Amenity Technical Manager.



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SURVIVE THE DOWNTURN

Robert Clive talks with Scott MacCallum about how golf clubs can survive the recession

Golf, indeed the world, is going through some tough times. The recession is biting, our houses are probably worth less than they were a few months ago and our pension could be compared to a ball bounced around on a roulette wheel. In golf, where there were once waiting lists there are now places available immediately and often without a joining fee – it's a buyers market. Indeed why join a club? Golfers can pick and choose where they play and by using the various 'two for one' schemes, which can include breakfast, lunch, free sleeve of balls, or buggy etc etc, it doesn't eat into the pay packet too much.

As sure as night follows day this affects revenue streams at clubs and the knock-on of it all can only be detrimental. How then can clubs best protect themselves against the economic downturn and ensure they are well placed to take advantage when the good times roll round again?

Surrey-based 360 Golf specialises in the business of golf and one of the services the company offers is a "business health check". This is a private, independent audit of the club's business performance and can range from just reviewing financial performance, through to more specifics like membership sales, marketing, budgeting, management structure, personnel training and sourcing. Most instructions of 360 Golf are made by clubs with a view to improve efficiency and service ultimately to maximise profit and minimise loss. The company also works with proprietors to develop golf facilities from scratch in UK, Europe and further a field – current and recent projects for 360 Golf include a new project in Morocco, feasibility work in Grenada, a major development in India and the construction of a new Peter McEvoy designed "play-golf" course in East Kilbride is near completion.

"My take on it is that we are definitely in a recession and I'm sure there are going to be some casualties," said Joint Managing Director, Robert Clive.

Robert believes that the struggling courses will need to evolve and be more imaginative or some will end up in receivership/administration, or worst still, cease to operate. With agricultural prices and yields per acre going up steadily at the moment, it could be argued that from a pure business perspective, a few loss making courses would be worth more as "sites" and produce better returns if returned to farmland rather than remain as a golf course – a complete turn around from the '80s and early 90s when so much farm land was turned into golf courses.

"There is no escaping the fact that there is too much supply. Too many golf courses in some areas all chasing the same business – a far cry from the heady days when golfers were queuing up at clubs and absolutely delighted to be able to give you money for a green fee or to become a member. Now all the power is in the hands of the golfer," said Robert.

"Although there will be some casualties, I think the golf market place will stabilise in the medium to long term and those clubs which come through it, will be stronger better businesses for the experience," he added.

"However, management, opinions and attitudes need to change; those that survive for the long term will have to set creative and imaginative policies to win business from competitors".



This economic uncertainty has also affected the new build market place for golf. Robert says that there are no identifiable reasons why a stand alone golf facility would justify be conceived and funded in the UK today.

"Nowadays virtually every new golf development we see is tied into a resort or housing development. In this country, if a house has a golf course view there is a minimum 30% premium on the price, in some parts of the world it's 100% so it's easy to understand what the drivers are for new golf course are!"

Robert also feels that there will be a good number of courses being sold in the UK over next few years for the usual variety of reasons but with more pressure being "exercised" by the owners bank/financiers.

"Banks are nervous and want some of their money back from the market place. If golf continues to suffer and the Bank has concerns over the management of the facility and therefore their debt, then it is inevitable some sales will be forced".

"At 360 Golf, we are receiving more enquiries from Banks this year looking for us to carry out audits on golf customers' performance. Although this is good business for 360 Golf, we would much prefer to be working with the owner or committees before the Bank take charge of the situation".

So what is Robert seeing when he looks out on the British golf market?

"Some clubs are open and honest about the problems they have, albeit because their Banks are telling them they have no choice but to face up to the facts, but there are others who are sticking their heads in the sand and hoping that the problems will just go away – these are the ones who are at greatest risk."

“It is not right to generalise, but loosely, proprietary clubs tend to have a little more business savvy because they have commercial ambitions, while traditional members clubs have relied too much on financial reserves to get them through, perhaps bequeathed to the club by a grateful ex-member or built up over years of joining fee income. Traditional members clubs are not finding these reserves reliable today and get found out as soon as something like the roof needs to be repaired.”

One of the problems that Robert comes across is the ineffectiveness of the conventional club committee structure.

“When things are tough it is vital to make brave and quick decisions and turn these into actions. In our experience, this often doesn’t happen given the set up of a club committee”.

“A club’s biggest dilemma is the conflict between the members being used to paying low annual subscriptions with limited numbers of visitors or societies and the challenge of making the books balance. This becomes nigh on impossible when there ceases to be a waiting list,” said Robert, painting a picture many will recognise.

“Until recently the normal churn of members wasn’t a huge issue as if 40 left the club they would be replaced by 40 new members who would each pay their joining fee in addition to replacing the annual subs paid by the departed members.

“The joining fee would often become part of the annual capital expenditure budget for the following year. But if you have 40 leaving and, say, 20 coming in you are now 20 joining fees down, 20 subs down as well as the lost expenditure at the bar. Suddenly it gets into a spiral.”

Another common failing for members clubs is not being realistic and therefore honest about a waiting list.

“We come across many clubs that say they’ve got a five year waiting list, which sounds great until you actually analysis it. Are people prepared to wait five years for membership? The answer is almost always no because there are now other clubs within easy range which people can join in the same day. We ask how recent the people on the list have been contacted. I often suggest writing to them all to confirm that they still want a place. You usually find the response is people are not prepared to wait that long and many of them have forgotten they were even on the list and have joined another club.”

Although solutions to financial concerns will vary from club to club, Robert offered some insight into how 360 Golf improves the financial performance of a facility, by identifying one key element of an overall strategy - that is to make the golf course work harder in filling the tee times which are not generally used by the membership.

“The senior roll up on a Monday might see the course busy in the early morning and then utterly empty by the afternoon while the old boys are having their cup of tea in the clubhouse. Everyone knows no-one will be going out in the afternoon and those tee times could be marketed to generate much needed additional revenues.”

Robert is also adamant that golf clubs that go down the “Slash and burn budget cutting route” are on the wrong track. Overstaffing is a mistake for obvious reasons but so is the opposite, when times get tough a well motivated, efficient greenkeeping team is essential.

“Your biggest asset is your golf course so arguably your most important employee is the guy who keeps it in good shape. If you let your best asset deteriorate so does the club’s reputation and appeal. Then you really are in trouble.”

“My take on it is that if you compromise on quality then you put the entire business at risk. However, you must look at the budgets of each department to make sure that the money is being spent as wisely as possible. When things get tight all staff and kit need to work even harder to get through it, “A Course Manager needs to be flexible. For example, he may be a real advocate of one make of machinery - ‘I’ve always been an “X” man’ or ‘I only use “X” and no other make will do.’ That’s not true. It may be the best piece of kit but it’s not correct to say it’s the only piece of kit. Sourcing from another company may ensure that you actually get a new fairway mower as opposed to being asked to keep the existing one going for another year because you were insisting on the more expensive, favourite brand.”

Another area where money can be made to work harder is in service agreements.

“When a service or leasing agreement runs out it’s amazing how many people immediately throw the machine away and get a new one. However, if well maintained, many machines can go on providing great value for many more years,” said Robert, who recommends that even clubs with a relatively small staff should retain a mechanic, even if he doubles up as a greenkeeper.

So the message is to examine your budgets, rather than slashing them and never compromise on quality.



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SAD NEWS

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Kelvin Sansum, Head Greenkeeper of Newton Green Golf Club. Kelvin fought a long battle with illness over the years, but continued to work whenever possible at the club, for whom he worked for 22 years. His commitment to his family and popularity in the area was expressed by those who packed the church, with many left outside for his funeral service at St Andrews Great Cornard. Our thoughts are with his wife Caroline, and his two daughters, Carlene and Danielle. He will be greatly missed.

Colin R Rushbrook
President of East Anglian Section

SPORTS RELIEF

To everybody who sponsored me for the sports relief mile, a huge thank you. I set out with the aim of raising £100 and finished with a total of £1,085. Thanks to all of you which once again proves what a great industry we work in. Included in that total was an anonymous donation of £75 from either a group of people or an individual?

To check out everyone who sponsored me you can go to: www.mysportrelief.com/personalPage. The registrationID is 93236. The donations credited to myself came from you technophobes who promised me cash which I did on my card so for those who haven't paid me yet, I shall me round looking for the money!

You will be pleased to know that I ran the three miles in 24 minutes and due to my rigorous training regime (restricting myself to one glass of red wine on Saturday night) I felt fairly good so I ran a 4th mile and finished in 32 minutes and it only took me twice as long as that to recover. I was also fortunate that I had some good companions to encourage me along.

The person who gave me the idea was Steve Isaac so I don't know if I will ever speak to him again.

Thanks again

Gordon



THANK YOU

When I was put forward to be considered as Toro student greenkeeper of the year by my tutor, Andy Wight, I was thrilled that my work had been recognised and felt honoured. I dreamt of going to America as I sat at the kitchen table writing my initial entry, never expecting to even come close to the finals.

The opportunity to be interviewed and to discuss greenkeeping at both the regional and national finals was a great experience. All the other greenkeepers I have met during this process are great representatives for the industry and I wish them all the best in their future careers. The weekend of the national final was a lot of fun as I was able to spend time discussing other peoples courses and sharing new ideas over a drink or two. I was greatly impressed by the knowledge and passion shown by all the finalists especially those who had only spent a few years in the industry.

I cannot begin to explain my thrill at being nominated as Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year. Attending the Winter school for turf managers at the University of Massachusetts was a once in a life time opportunity and enabled me to build on my experience and skills as well as network with greenkeepers from around the world, I would highly recommend the course to anybody interested in learning more about turf management. The trade show in Florida opened my eyes to the new technology available to me in my work and introduced me to some interesting new concepts. I was warmly welcomed at the Toro Headquarters in Minneapolis and the factories in Tomah and Chicopee, the work that goes into developing and producing state of the art greenkeeping equipment is very impressive, I was able to see the process from start to finish.

I would like to thank Lely, Toro and BIGGA for this amazing opportunity to represent British Student greenkeepers and for recognising the importance of education as part of greenkeeping. I am lucky to have had the ongoing support of Andy Wight, an exceptional tutor. I would also like to thank Luton Hoo for supporting me in this venture. Last but not least I would like to thank my family and wife Barbara for encouraging me to do my best and for never complaining about the time away from home even though our first child Charles was only four weeks old when I left for America.

I wish the best of luck to this year's nominees, enjoy every moment!

Avon Bridges
Head Greenkeeper
Luton Hoo

Please email your letters to Scott MacCallum, scott@bigga.co.uk
or Melissa Jones, melissa@bigga.co.uk
or post to: BIGGA House, Aldwark Manor, Aline, York YO61 1UF

SEVEN DEADLY SUNS

Rates of melanoma, the most dangerous form of skin cancer have increased by 43% in the last 25 years making it the fastest rising cancer in Britain. A British Skin survey has revealed that over a third of British men and women are unsure of what an SPF is. People are also confused about the difference between UVA and UVB rays, with three-quarters of those questioned attributing UVA rays to burning and 77% UVB rays to ageing.

So what are the common myths about the sun and sunbathing?

1. MYTH: I sit in the safety of the shade, never in direct sunlight so don't need to use sun protection.

FACT: The damaging UV rays from the sun are reflected from sand, sea, snow, water and other surfaces and so sun damage can occur while you are sitting in the shade.

Regardless of whether you are in the shade or fully exposed to the sun's rays, you must take sun protection seriously and use an SPF 30 or above. The SPF refers to the relative protection against sunburn that you will receive from a product compared to not applying it. So sunscreens with a higher SPF offer more protection. However, SPF only refers to protection against UVB rays (burning) and it is the UVA exposure which is increasingly linked to long term sun damage and skin cancer.

When it comes to applying sun cream, it should be applied 30 minutes before exposure to the sun, re-applied every two hours and immediately after swimming or vigorous exercise. Remember to apply sun cream after towelling as this will almost certainly remove most of the traces of existing sun cream. It is also recommended to apply sunscreen liberally, using approximately three tablespoons for an average sized adult.

2. MYTH: Water resistant products protect me while I am in the water and I don't need to re-apply them when I sunbathe.

FACT: Water resistant products do afford protection in the water, but you need to take care. Depending on how long you are in the water and what activities you may do, the sun cream may be totally or partially lost; it almost certainly will be removed when you towel yourself dry. The only safe advice is to regularly re-apply the sun cream, especially after towelling.

Many people do not realize how much sun damage they are getting when they are in, or near, the water. This is because the cooling effect of the water lessens the warning usually caused by the sun's heat, but does not reduce the light incident on the skin.

Equally, many parents paddle in the water while safe-guarding their children and do not think about protecting themselves from the incident and reflected light they are exposed to.

Always ensure that you use a water resistant SPF 30 or above and remember to re-apply it straight after swimming. Taking extra care with children is vital and make sure they wear T-shirts for extra protection while swimming.

3. MYTH: My skin never burns so I won't get any long term skin damage.

FACT: It is the total lifetime exposure to the sun's rays that is proportional to the risk of a skin cancer occurring, not necessarily episodes of sunburn, although these will heighten the risk. All exposure to the sun will add to the overall risk of a cancer occurring. Even if exposure to the sun doesn't manifest itself as sunburn, exposure to damaging UVA increases your risk of long-term skin damage.

Research shows that unprotected sun exposure in the first 15 years of a child's life significantly increases the risk of skin cancer later.

It is true the extra pigment in darker skin does afford some added protection against the sun's harmful UV rays and that the skin is slightly less susceptible to burning.

4. MYTH: I do not need to use a sunscreen when the weather is cooler.

FACT: When it is cool but bright, there are still lots of UV rays so sun protection all year round is a must.

Even in relatively sun-free countries like Britain, it can take as little as half an hour to get sunburn, posing a serious threat to your health in the long term.

It is also important to remember that sun exposure that does not result in burning can still cause damage to the skin cells and increase your risk of developing skin cancer.

Research indicates 200 new cases of skin cancer are diagnosed every day in the UK, and melanoma is rising faster than any other type of deadly cancer. Don't assume because you live in a cooler climate there is little risk of sun damage. Skin damage can occur even from exposure on cloudy, rainy or overcast days.

5. MYTH: Sunscreens with a high SPF prevent damage from the sun's rays.

FACT: The higher the SPF number the more protection there is from burning caused by UVB radiation.

While sunburn is mainly caused by UVB rays, research now shows UVA rays may be just as, if not more, important in causing premature skin ageing and skin cancer.

Although broad-spectrum sunscreens give protection against both, product labelling can be misleading with the product possibly offering very low UVA protection.

The UVA Star Rating System gives a good indication of the quality of protection against UVA rays, with one star being a low level of protection and five-stars being the highest level of UVA protection you can get and this is better than those products making the new 'broad spectrum protection' claim, while not stating their actual UVA protection level.

6. MYTH: I never sunbathe, so my skin will never be damaged by the sun.

FACT: Many cases of sunburn happen when people are not deliberately sunbathing.

According to the Skin Cancer Working Party, individuals who develop skin cancer do not always have a history of deliberate sunbathing. Those who have an outdoor occupation and/or recreation such as golfing, gardening, skiing or sailing are also at risk and must learn to protect their skin.

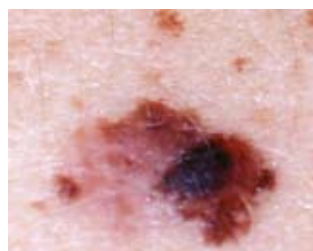
People are also living longer and so their lifetime sun exposure is greater. They often have more time and money for outdoor recreation and holidays in sunny climates and although many people actively choose not to sunbathe they are still putting themselves at risk.

It is likely most skin damage from ultraviolet radiation occurs during childhood and it is thought a build-up of over-exposure to the sun over a period of several years can in the future lead to the development of skin cancer.

7. MYTH: I use fake tan regularly which gives me a lovely golden brown colour so I don't feel the need to cover up and protect my skin in the sun

FACT: Using fake tan products is a great way to achieve that bronzed goddess look – but don't be fooled when stepping out into the sun. Most tanning products do not offer protection against sunlight, so you still need to use sun protection and follow all of the safety tips as normal when you're out in the sun.

As well as your tanning cream, ensure you slap on some sun protection when out and about. Experts recommend using an SPF 30 or above. Not only will this help to reduce your risks of developing cancer but it will also help to protect your skin from premature ageing – which no amount of fake tan will be able to hide!



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THE SEVEN DEADLY SKIN CANCER FACTS

- There were 8900 new cases of malignant melanoma reported in 2004 in the UK.
- In 2004 melanoma was the seventh most common cancer in the UK.
- In the age group 20-39, melanoma is the second most common cancer.
- In males over a third of all cases of melanoma occur on the trunk, while the most common site for females is the legs.
- Over the last 25 years rates of malignant melanoma in the UK have increased almost five times in males and have more than tripled in females.
- Both UVA and UVB radiation are linked to all types of skin cancer.
- Number of moles, family history, fair hair and fair skin increase the risk of skin cancer.

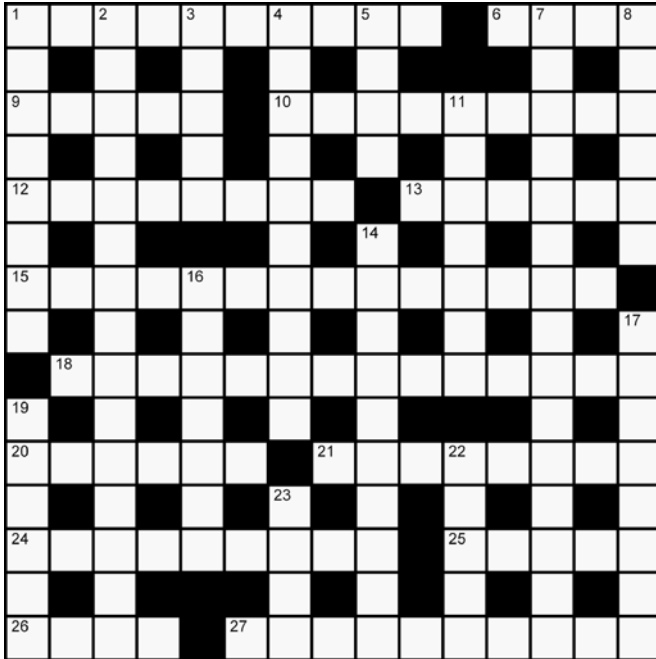
For more information visit: www.uvstat.com or call: 01582 560393.



In the Shed

Greenkeeper International brings you 'In the Shed', a puzzle page to keep you entertained when the weather forces you in or for when times are slow.

CROSSWORD



Across

- 1 Type of aircraft sometimes called an eggbeater (10)
- 6 In television, person who moves a camera while in use (4)
- 9 George Gordon —, English romantic poet (5)
- 10 British comedian who created Basil Don Bond character (4,5)
- 12 Greek philosopher who specialised in the field of ethics (8)
- 13 Instantly identifiable as representative of something (6)
- 15 Missing for unknown reasons (1,1-3)
- 18 Come again? (1,3,4,6)
- 20 State of noisy confusion (6)
- 21 Fill in a form (8)
- 24 Global (9)
- 25 In darkness (5)
- 26 Term for a North American, specifically a New Englander (4)
- 27 US president during World War II (10)

Down

- 1 Showy flower, symbol of Hawaii, South Korea & Malaysia (8)
- 2 Role of 3rd Earl William Peel since October 2006 (4,11)
- 3 A form of line dancing? (5)
- 4 Someone who torments - anagram of CORRUPT, SEE (10)
- 5 Relaxed, not strict (4)
- 7 "Disguise" name of Puck, a pagan nature spirit (5,10)
- 8 Coup d'etat, either illegally or by force (6)
- 11 Region of Greece, capital Tripoli (7)
- 14 Pigeonhole (10)
- 16 Of words, ancestry etc., related by origin (7)
- 17 Distant relative (8)
- 19 Furnish, provide (6)
- 22 Velvet-like fabric, usually softer and with longer nap (5)
- 23 Of an aircraft, to move slowly before or after take-off (4)

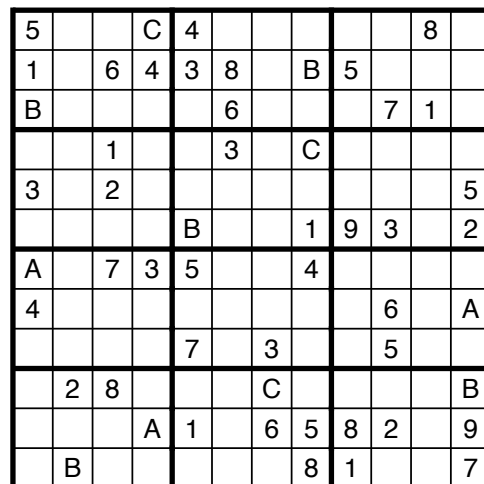
IN THE SHED ANSWERS ON PAGE 58

QUICK 'NINE-HOLE' QUIZ

1. In golf, Augusta is in which US state?
2. Who was the England football captain at the start of 2001?
3. In football, which team won the most Scottish League titles during the 1970s?
4. What was the previous name of the UEFA Cup?
5. Who lost the 1974 and 1978 World Cup finals?
6. What is the name of the Nottingham Ice Hockey Team?
7. In which country was the boxer Evander Holyfield born?
8. Who co-hosted the World Cup in 2002?
9. Where were the first Winter Olympics held in 1924?

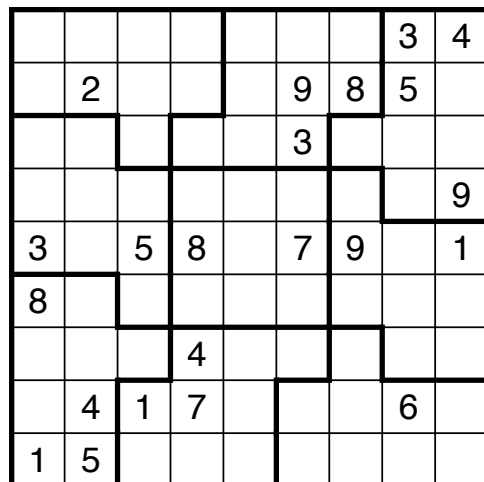
MONSTER SUDOKU

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x4 box contains the numbers 1 to 9 and the letters A,B and C.



SQUIGGLY SUDOKU

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 12 box shape contains the numbers 1 to 9.



HUMAN RESOURCES

BIGGA's Management Support series produced by Xact
www.xact.uk.com



WHEN DOES A WARNING EXPIRE?

If you are unfortunate enough to be subject to disciplinary action it is normal, after a period of improved conduct or performance, that the warning issued to you will have expired.

It has long been the conventional wisdom in employment law that employers cannot rely on expired warnings to justify the termination of employment except in the matter of selection for redundancy.

The ACAS Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures (DGP) provides guidance on this. Not only does it tell employers that warnings should be recorded but, moreover, advises that after a period of time has elapsed they should be disregarded for disciplinary purposes. It goes on to recommend that that period should be:

- 12 months for a final written warning
- 6 months for a verbal, stage one or first written warning.

Many organisations' disciplinary codes refer to the fact that a warning will expire after a set period of time and will be removed from the employee's personnel records.

However, in the recent case of Airbus v Webb the Court of Appeal has suggested that an employer can rely, in certain circumstances, on expired warnings to justify what would otherwise have been an unfair dismissal.

In this case, Webb was dismissed for gross misconduct, having taken a break when he should have been working. The incident happened three weeks after the expiry of his final written warning for a similar offence.

Four other employees were also caught but, as they had clean disciplinary records, they were given final written warnings whereas Webb was dismissed. Webb claimed at an employment tribunal that he had been unfairly dismissed as the company had wrongly relied on an expired final written warning.

The Court of Appeal has found that the employer, in the limited circumstances where the employee has committed a serious offence so soon after the expiry of a final written warning, was entitled to rely on the expired warning and hence the dismissal was fair.

This decision is highly controversial and has created a great deal of uncertainty for employers and employees alike. In particular, employees cannot now assume that just because a warning has expired, if they commit a similar offence, that warning may be relied on by their employer to justify a dismissal that would, otherwise, be unfair.

Employers too have a degree of uncertainty, in that they may rely on an expired warning without any degree of knowledge of whether or not an employment tribunal would uphold their decision or not.

Employees need to be aware that they may not be able to 'get away' with misconduct after a final warning has expired and their behaviour may need to be exemplary for some time thereafter.

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Last year's winning picture of The Duke's Course, Woburn taken by Michael Cunningham

SNAP HAPPY!

BIGGA's Golf Photography Competition is back

CALLING ALL BUDDING PHOTOGRAPHERS!

Are you proud of your course? Do you catch yourself admiring it in a certain light?

The BIGGA Golf Photography Competition, back for its third year, creates an opportunity for greenkeepers to display their artistic flair, while also earning some publicity for their club.

The winner will receive a full course profile in Greenkeeper International, a trophy and a special prize, while the 12 best pictures will be selected for the 2009 BIGGA Calendar.

Photographs will be accepted in three forms. Prints (nine inch by seven inch), transparencies, or digitally (pictures MUST be at least 300 dpi and capable of being blown up to nine inches by seven inches in size).

Anyone wishing to enter should send their pictures to:
Scott MacCallum or **Melissa Jones**, BIGGA HOUSE, Aldwark Manor, Alne, York, YO61 1UF by July 31, 2008.

Alternatively you can email them to scott@bigga.co.uk or melissa@bigga.co.uk

Entries will be judged by Alan Birch, whose inspiration the competition has been; Professional Golf Course Photographer, Eric Hepworth, Golf Photographer, Matthew Harris and Scott MacCallum, Editor of Greenkeeper International.

Only BIGGA members are eligible to enter.

So come on...strike a pose!



Second prize went to Marek Zubert last year for this picture of Mount Juliet, County Kilkenny



Chris Sherrington took third place last year with his shot of Sunningdale Old

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New Products



NEW RANGE OF TEE TURF

Tee Turf NF (for Non Filled), is a new product from ALC. A new generation all-weather artificial turf designed specifically as a low wear, low maintenance alternative to natural turf. A tough, 35mm thick knitted nylon construction gives greater pile density enabling easy installation without the use of sand or rubber infill. Standard tee pegs can be placed easily and securely anywhere on the surface or balls can be played directly off the surface if required.

For further information, please contact ALC on: 01474 364 320 or visit www.teeturf.com

NEW TO THE MICRO EXCAVATOR MARKET

Bobcat has launched the new E08 and E10 micro-excavators, designed and engineered to provide the best combination of high performance, stability, operator safety, ergonomics and durability in the micro-excavator market.

The E08 micro-excavator is a conventional model with a machine weight of 1028 kg and a maximum digging depth of 1.82 m. The E10 model is a zero tail swing micro-excavator with a maximum digging depth of 1.82 m and a machine weight of 1066 kg.

For more information visit: www.bobcat.com



INSTANT PAIN RELIEF

A device specifically designed to ease the pain suffered by those playing golf and other sports is now available in the UK. SuperStim Pro is no bigger than the size of a mobile phone yet after just 15 minutes use the device effectively relieves pain, strengthens muscles and substantially speeds up the healing process for sufferers.

SuperStim Pro claim this is the only product of its kind on the market and has proved crucial in treating numerous conditions suffered by golfers. There are no side effects and the device can be used as often as required, even while playing golf.

For more information visit: www.superstimpro.co.uk

ATTACHMENT EXPANDS VERSATILITY

High-performance aerators are now available as part of a new range of attachments for Grasshopper front-mounted mowers distributed in the UK by Rustons Engineering.

The PTO-driven AERAvator has solid forged-steel tines that vibrate rapidly as they penetrate the ground, so the areas around the holes are fractured, relieving compaction and opening up the soil. The design of the tines and the heavy-duty construction of the machines enable them to cope with dry, compacted grass areas without previous irrigation, even if they contain stones. As no debris is left on the surface, treated areas are ready for immediate use without further work.

For more information tel: 01480 455151.



NEW BRUSHCUTTERS

Echo are pleased to announce the arrival of two new brushcutters, the SRM-2306ESL, and SRM-335ES.

The lightweight SRM-2306ESL is ideal for domestic use, weighing just 5.6kg. The Echo 21.2cc two-stroke engine delivers plenty of power to enable clearing of dense brush.

The larger SRM-335ES, available with loop handle or U handle, is fitted with a 30.5cc two stroke engine, and a 1845mm shaft.



For more information tel: 01844 278800 or visit: www.echo-tools.com

STAY SAFE THIS SEASON

Nomix Enviro is encouraging safe and legal herbicide storage this season via their range of purpose built chemical storage units.

Chem-Safes are the ideal way to meet your herbicide storage legal obligations. They are lockable, leak proof and organised.

The range of units include chemical safes of varying sizes, walk in chemical stores and colour coded fuel stores. Chem-Safes range from 15 - 1500 litre capacity and can be used as fixed units at your business address or in vehicles for mobile storage.

All products are fully seam welded with leak proof sumps to eliminate the risk of any chemical escaping. Vapour seals absolutely remove the risk of bystander exposure to fumes or a risk of explosion.

For more information call: 01264 388050.

TWO-IN-ONE

Greenkeepers faced with the all-important task of ground rejuvenation can boost performance and efficiency with the Raycam AERA-SEEDER, one of the latest innovations from Campey Turf Care Systems. The tractor mounted, purpose-built implement combines the functions of an aerator and an overseeder for maximum versatility.

For more information visit: www.campeyturfcare.com



PREMIUM WATERPROOF BACKPACK

OverBoard, design and manufacturer of waterproof travel and sports gear, today announced the Premium Waterproof Backpack.

A spacious 100% waterproof roll top bag that protects its contents from water, sand, dirt and dust! The backpack is available now from www.over-board.co.uk



MAKING HEALTH & SAFETY LESS PAINFUL

Punctus announces the release of "Punctus Professional", a module complementing the existing Punctus System, containing Health & Safety, Full Cost Calculations and Time Keeping Functions in addition to the existing documentation on jobs done, man hours, machines etc.

Punctus Professional is an inexpensive, fast and easy to handle system for day-to-day application with documentation of appropriate procedures requiring just a few mouse-clicks a day.

Safety advice on a daily basis, training and exposure to noise and vibration (including the seven day rolling averages) are all covered in clear documentation. All reports are generated automatically.



For more information email: mail@punctus.biz or tel: ++49531 250 56 44. www.punctus.biz

LEAF COLLECTION

Pinnacle Power Equipment has announced an important new range of vacuum sweepers to replace its ever-popular Billy Goat KD machines that feature in so many equipment sheds around the country.

With innovative design ideas for the 21st century such as zipperless collection bags and optional on-board hose kits, the new models require little maintenance and are quieter and more powerful than its predecessors.

Powered by a 6.5hp GSV Honda or 6hp Briggs & Stratton Quantum engines the vacs have five blade steel impellers with debris reducing knives for efficient shredding and optional shredder screens to reduce the bulk even further.

For more information call: 01932 788799 or visit: www.pinnaclepower.co.uk

HIGH-CAPACITY SCRUB CUTTERS

The new Bush Hog 320 series heavy-duty rotary scrub cutters and the new Bush Hog Flex Wing high capacity cutter are now available from OPICO Ltd.

The mounted 320 series have evolved from the original Bush Hog 300 series which for over 30 years has been used by woodland and estate managers for clearing scrub, cutting rides and managing vegetation.



For more information visit : www.opico.co.uk

SINGLE SIDED HEDGETRIMMERS

Echo UK have announced the launch of two new single sided hedgetrimmers, the HC-331ES and HC-341ES.

Designed for commercial use, these two new hedgetrimmers have extensive vibration-dampening features, which means both models achieve remarkably low vibration levels, substantially increasing safe operation time.

Both models are fitted with an Echo 23.6cc two stroke engine, and feature the Echo ES Starter which for the operator, means greatly reduced pulling power required on the starter rope, compared to other makes of hedge cutter. There is also no kick-back effect in cranking. A new fully transparent fuel tank allows the user to easily monitor fuel levels.





News from the Chief Executive

I was saddened to learn of the sudden death of Bert Cross who has been a leading light in greenkeeping and an example to all for a great number of years. I have enjoyed Bert's company on many occasions and he will be missed by many people, not only in the UK but also in Africa, where he and his wife did so much unsung charitable work. Our sympathy goes to the family that he leaves behind.

The building work at BIGGA House is progressing well and the completion deadline of the end of April should easily be achieved. We are already surprised by how much more space the development has created and we eagerly await the time when we can see if the office furniture fits as we have planned.

There has been some concern by the Board regarding the Association's vulnerability should I not be able to carry out my duties for some unforeseen reason and there have been suggestions of the appointment of a Deputy, or someone who may aspire to that role in due course. After full consideration it has been decided to strengthen the roles of the Heads of Department so that they have joint and several responsibility for the general management of the office while still reporting to me. By improving the communication between them and me I should be able to devote more of my time to developing and reviewing the Business Plan to ensure that the Association is able to face the challenges of the industry as they exist today as well as improving its overall position. This will incorporate greater use by the Board and the Management Team of the sub committees and details of scheduled meetings will be advertised in both Greenkeeper International and on the BIGGA website. Additionally the Board has created an Environmental sub committee that will look at the Association's own policy as well as developing initiatives for the industry.

The annual selection of a new Vice Chairman has become increasingly difficult in recent years as the demands of the role increase but so do the demands of the job held by suitable candidates. Several members have expressed an interest in being considered and so in order to make the process more democratic the Board will in future invite the Sections to make nominations through their respective Regional board. Nominations will then be reviewed by the main Board and assessed for interview by the Chairman, the Past Chairman, the Vice Chairman and myself. A job description will be available to anyone interested together with broad details of the amount of time required throughout the year. No nominations will be considered without the candidate having received the prior approval and unqualified support of their employer.

Despite the breakdown of talks with the IOG the Board still feels that the Association has something to offer groundsmen and that a suitable category of membership for could still be appropriate. To this end a review panel has been set up that will look at the potential for developing this initiative and it is the intention that a report be submitted to members for their consideration in the not too distant future. This will detail the advantages to both exiting and potential members and may well incorporate a strategic alliance within the industry. While any such move does not need to be put to a meeting of members it is never the less considered by the Board to be in the best interest of the membership to allow for a process of full consultation. Once published I will be pleased to try to address any concerns that members may have.

John Pemberton



SCOTTISH REGION – CENTRAL

For anyone who isn't aware, I start this month's report with the sad news of the death of Jim Finlayson who passed away on March 16. Jim was a great supporter of greenkeeping over the years, always keen to lend a hand at Section events and a good friend to many in the industry. Our thoughts are with his wife, Margaret, and his family.

Weather wise, It has been a strange old start to the year again up here on the East coast of Scotland with what feels like even stronger winds than normal for a sustained period and light snow falls both over Easter and early April. March was so dry that many Course Managers were hand watering greens during the day just to keep the grass alive.

Thanks go to Elliot Small for the work he has done in writing up the early history of the Greenkeeping Association in Scotland which is available to view on the Central Section website: www.biggacentralsection.org.uk It is fascinating to discover that greenkeepers were getting together in the very early 1900's to discuss their situation. I am told there is no truth that in the first picture on display Elliot is the guy second from the right in the front row!

The first week in April saw the American Golf Course Architects hold their AGM in Scotland along with a tour of some of our country's finest courses. While in St Andrews they also took the opportunity to visit the Castle Course which is due to open in June and were extremely positive in their feedback, both in the layout and the grow in conditions they saw.

Gordon Moir



EAST

I write this report in early April with Primula Drummondii's and some of the dwarf Rhododendrons in full flower in our garden, despite the artic conditions outside. The Fine Turf industry is at present extremely volatile with price increases almost becoming a weekly occurrence. Hopefully prices will stabilise in the not too distant future.

Our congratulations this month go to Scott Poole on his appointment as Head Greenkeeper at The Hirsell Golf Club, in Coldstream. I am sure his previous employers, Duns Golf Club, will wish him well! He commences his new appointment on the 7th April. The new Head Greenkeeper at Duns is Scott's former Deputy, Wayne Ford. He joined the club as a trainee in January 2000, working initially under the guidance of Ian Aitchison and latterly under Scott. I am sure he will prove a worthy successor.

The previous incumbent at The Hirsell, Geoff Logan, has departed after many years loyal service to set up his own Landscape/Garden Maintenance business in Prestonpans. I am sure all in the section will join me in wishing him best wishes for the future.

I also have changes to report at Melrose with John Christie departing to join the grounds maintenance team at Borders General Hospital. He has worked at Melrose for a number of years after learning the trade at Minto Golf Club.

Around the Green

His first boss at Minto, (a real blast from the past!) Sandy Whillans, has taken over the hot seat at Melrose.

Out of Greenkeeping for a number of years, he returned a few years ago assisting John on a seasonal basis. I am sure Sandy's wealth of knowledge will benefit his employers in his new role.

On a personal note, Roz is off to Crete in a few days time, the down side for me being all the household chores. Oh well, roll on October!

Until Next Month,

Mike Dooner



NORTH

As I am writing this month's article it is absolutely dingy with snow outside. At last some sort of a Winter. I find it a bit disturbing that Aberdeen and the surrounding areas have been named the hottest places in the British Isles just lately. It's fine, but in February and March? You kind of expect the snow to come at some point but it is getting close to the beginning of the season for us now and we're just finishing off winter programmes.

It might be difficult for some of us to get onto the course to finish off these programmes. You can just hear the moans from the golfers already, can't you? We don't seem to be getting anything like we used to in the way of weather. Just a sign of things to come, what do you think?

Stevie Frost, of Royal Aberdeen, has just celebrated (if you can call it that) his 25th year at the golf club. At the recent do in the clubhouse to commemorate his achievement, his boss and friend, Robert Patterson, commented that if he was there for another 25 years he'll be 66. Who needs enemies? Congratulations Steve and on behalf of the Section. Wish you all the best for the next 25 years.

One guy who is leaving the Section for another golf club is Stuart Cordiner, of Peterhead Golf Club. He has taken the big step of moving down to Portsmouth and working on a course down there. Again on behalf of the Section we wish you all the best. Hughie has said that he is going to miss you. Ah bless!

The two greenkeepers teams will be taking part in the annual trades competition at Hazelhead golf club. There is only one problem though, we're a man short. Anyone interested in taking part ideally should be a 3 handicapper or less and get in touch with George Mitchell, at Newmachar Golf Club, on 07704851429. I did offer the services of Euan Rankin but George said he'd manage. If any of you fancy going along to watch the lads then I'm sure that they'll appreciate the support.

You should all have received your forms for both of the outings that section stages. Please keep them safe. If you haven't got yours yet then please get in touch with Dale Robertson.

Dale received a phone call from Stuart Grant, of Ballater Golf Club, who has been lucky enough to be selected for the BIGGA Support team at Royal Birkdale. He was wondering if anyone else had been selected and if possible share transport down. If there is you could maybe contact Stuart on 01339 755567.

On a final note I have a complaint from the in-laws. In the last Section news I mentioned 'lads' a couple of times. I do know of a couple of 'girls' in the Section. I apologise and will make sure that I include you in the future.

Ben Brookes
Murcar Links GC



NORTHERN REGION - NORTH WEST

I have to start with some sad news about Colin Denny, who is a North West committee member. Colin is the Course Manager at Heaton Moor Golf Club where we are staging our spring tournament. I hear he is making a slow recovery after suffering a stroke. From me, and all the North West committee, Good luck Colin and we hope you are soon back to good health.

A few movers and groovers. John Davenport has moved from Turton GC. to Dunnerholm GC, near Barrow, and an old friend of mine, Neil Woolfrey, has moved to Bolton GC. from Great Lever and Farnworth.

I have just finished watching the Grand National and am pleased to say that I had the winner. Five pence each way, not bad, better in my pocket than the bookies.

If you have any news please contact me on 0151-289-4625
my e-mail is jsheehan@blueyonder.co.uk

Chris Sheehan



SHEFFIELD

The Sheffield Section held its spring lecture at Rotherham Golf Club on Wednesday March 12. The two speakers on the day were Stephen Bernhard and Martyn Jones. Both lectures were very interesting and I'm sure left everyone with a few things to think about. The day was well attended by members and trade, although as with all our Sheffield events there are still places open for anyone else who may be interested in our lecture or golf days.

I would also like to thank our sponsors for the day, Rigby Taylor and Bernhards. Special thanks go to Mike Brear and Steve Nixon who helped organise the day. A big thanks as well goes to Rotherham GC for letting the Section use these wonderful facilities again also the catering staff at Rotherham, who once again provided us with a wonderful buffet which I'm sure everyone enjoyed.

During the lecture at Rotherham a presentation was made to Chris Astle for his seven years service as Secretary. I'm sure everyone will agree with me in once again thanking Chris for all his hard work. Chris has also recently left Wheatley GC to take up a new position in the industry working for Golf and Turf machinery. Good luck Chris

All golf clubs in the Section will be receiving fixture cards for the 2008

Around the Green

season shortly. Many thanks to Aitkens for sponsoring these cards and especially Peter Fell for pulling it all together for us. All Section events for 2008 and will be listed on the fixture card, so it will be nice to see more and more people turn up to Sheffield Section events.

In a few days on the May 12 we will be holding our Spring competition at Coxmoor Golf Club with a 1 30 tee off time, so hopefully as many of you as possible will have returned your entry forms on time! And will be eagerly awaiting the 12th!

As usual any Section news please feel free to contact me on 07793111845 or jvl1967@sky.com (any news is worth putting in the magazine then people in the Section can hear about these things, such as moving jobs, marriages, births etc then hopefully we don't have to have months when we haven't got any Section news in the magazine!)

John Lax



NORTHERN

Hi everyone, it has been a busy month this time. The Section held a very successful spring seminar at the De Vere Oulton Hall. We would like to thank every one involved in the organisation and running of the event. Special thanks must go to Rigby Taylor and Bernhard & Company for their kind sponsorship and our guest Speakers, Martyn Jones, Stephen Bernhard and Oulton Hall's own Jim Brown. I am sure they gave everyone who attended a very interesting and enjoyable day with a lot to think about.

We say goodbye to two prominent members this month, Mel Guy who has been involved with the Section for many years and is now retiring from Sheriff Amenity, also our present Treasurer, Andy Slingsby, who is leaving to pursue another career. We wish them both good luck for the future and are sure we will see them again.

One amendment to the events calendar President's day will be held at Cookridge Hall on Wednesday, July 2 at 12.30.

Please get in touch if you have any news

Section Secretary

Adam Speight

07739 319060

adam@speight1156.fsife.co.uk



MIDLAND REGION – MIDLAND

Well isn't it a small world. While travelling back from Cumbria after a trout fishing trip I got talking to a bunch of chaps on their way to enlist in our Royal Navy. One of such it turned out to have been a greenkeeping student at Elmwood. A college of excellence within our field, I have been fortunate to have studied there myself. I do however wonder what skills in greenkeeping can be related towards a career in the Navy. Well I'm sure that Danny Partridge will soon find-out onboard H.M.S. Raleigh. Good luck to you all in defending our fine nation. My only experience of the nautical being in Austria with a greens mower - float it didn't!

What's this I hear; Nigel (the Dandy) Tyler has gone down on one knee and become engaged to Sue. When's the wedding date, mate? Congratulations to you both. Our thanks to Nigel/Sherriff Amenity for sponsoring this year's Section Programme card and for his good works on committee supporting our section.

Congratulations to Paul Mills, who is the new Course Manager at Penn GC. I hope that your experience there will be half as enjoyable and rewarding as my time there was.

And just to finish thanks to Bathgate Leisure for sponsoring this month's calendar page. Details of their topdressings, sands etc can be found at www.bathgatesilica.co.uk.

Sean McDade
Training and Education



EAST MIDLAND

Just to let all members know that our Summer Tournament will be held at Mickleover Golf Club on Thursday 24th July 2008, the AGM Tournament will be held at Staverton Park on Friday 31st October 2008.

We are also looking if people are interested in attending a four day First Aid course the cost of this will be £189 per person. In addition, a Talunex course will be held at Charnwood Golf Club, the price being £110 per person, but if we have over five this will reduce to £90 per person.

Please contact the Secretary Dan Rodgers on 07745 227224 if you are interested in any of these courses. Moreover, congratulations to Pete Billings on his return to the industry at Cotgrave Golf Club. We wish him good luck in his position as Course Manager.

Dan Rodgers, Shirland Golf Club, Lower delves,
Shirland, Alfreton, Derbyshire, DE55 6AU

Dan Rodgers

Secretary

07745227224



EAST OF ENGLAND

Well what a month March has proved to be! I think just about every weather condition has been experienced in the last few weeks from beautiful warm sunshine to three inches of snow, with heavy rain and high winds in between it all. Plus the fact that Easter has been so early this year, this has meant a lot of clubs expecting summer playing conditions earlier than usual and finishing winter work a month sooner. At Immingham the course has gone from looking like it does in the middle of summer to a wet winter look all in one week, unfortunately just as 160 golfers prepared to play in our Easter Open Event. Oh well, it won't be that early again for another 30 years or so!



In the midst of all this my wife, Sam, gave birth to our first child, Archie James, arriving Easter Saturday weighing in at a healthy eight pounds. I am just about adjusting to the sleepless nights and my nappy change times are getting quicker and quicker, especially in the middle of the night. I am not sure if he is the beginning of a new greenkeeping dynasty but he has certainly volunteered for bunker raking in a few summers time!

One person leaving our Section this month is Gareth Rogers, formerly of Grimsby Golf Club. Good luck for the future to you and your family.

As I write this our first golf day of the season at Pottergate is a couple of weeks away. I am sure there will be a good turnout for the event and hopefully the weather will have settled down by then. The results will feature in next month's Section notes.

Every Section member is invited to our golf days, regardless of golfing ability. Don't be scared! The days are always fun, a good way to meet other greenkeepers, network, share problems and make friends.

All of the golf days are now booked for this year. A list of the dates should have been sent out by now, however if anyone has any queries on the dates and venues then contact Rob Welford at Cleethorpes Golf Club on 07702435122. Any Head Greenkeepers out there that are willing to host one of our events in the future should get in touch with one of the committee members.

A quick reminder to all to check out our website and register on the forums.

www.eastofenglandbigga.com

Steve Beverly
Immingham Golf Club



BERKS, BUCKS & OXON

Sunburn and ice creams last April, but it is frostbite and icicles this year, and there's more to come as April has recorded the heaviest snowfall for 20 years. Whatever happened to the proverb "Sweet April showers, do spring May flowers" or as the French say, "Avril et mai, Sont la cle de l annee?" I will let you look it up.

The Summer Tournament has been confirmed and this year will be held at The Lambourne Club on Tuesday, June 24. Please amend the date in your diary as this has changed. Gem Professional has kindly offered to sponsor the day at a course set in 180 acres of breathtaking parkland with magnificent oaks and beech trees which adorn this prestigious private club. Traditional colonial style elegance will await those in the clubhouse with a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere to ensure we all have a great day, so please book early and send your entry forms in on time.

Other dates for your diary are The Cricket – Golf Match, IOG verses B,B &O. Yes, we are having a cricket match organised by Adam King, at Radley College, on July 9, which will consist of 9 holes on the course followed by 20-20 cricket in the latter part of the day, with a few glasses of ale and a Barbie. Do please get in touch for a great day out.

Gareth Acteson has been organising the Rigby Taylor Pairs Competition which again will be played competitively throughout 2008. Gareth has also joined the first time dad club and Fraser James Acteson was born on March 3 weighing in at 7lb 10. Natasha and baby are doing very well; Dad has been on burping lessons and struggling to stay awake. Congratulations to the new Acteson family.

Entry forms will be sent out with plenty of time and can also be downloaded from the section website. www.bbo-greenkeepers.co.uk

If anyone out there has any news or views please get in touch.

Mark Day
mark.day@tacticgolf.com



SOUTH EAST REGION - ESSEX

I must apologise for the lack of Section news over the past couple of months. I have posted the March and April news on the website and have been keeping you up to date on the comings and goings in the 'Latest News Section' on the site.

We have the golf event dates for this year: Spring Tournament, Thursday, May 15, Upminster GC; Summer Medal, Wednesday, June 25, The Warley Park GC; John Deere Challenge (Invitation Only), Thursday, August 7, Abridge Golf & Country Club; Autumn Tournament, Thursday, August 14, Three Rivers Golf & Country Club; Winter Tournament, Thursday, October 2, Bentley GC; AGM and Christmas Tournament, Thursday, November 27, The Essex Golf & Country Club. The Knockout Competition starts shortly so watch the website and your post for entry forms.

The events this year will be starting a bit earlier than in past years. So please check your start times carefully and allow time to get to the events. As I have stated on the website, in the March news, I have now taken over the running of the website. I would like to improve on what is already a good site and would if ask any of you could email me, anything that you think may be of interest to our members.

By the time you receive this news item we will be nearly ready for our first event of the year at Upminster GC, I'm sure Dougie Fernie, the Course Manager will be.

Please refer to the website for all, up to the minute information in the 'Latest News Section'. I will be using this as an update notice board. Course information, starting times and directions will all be in the 'Latest Golf Event' section and I will be posting this as soon as I have the start times from Antony.

Have a good month and look forward to seeing you all at Upminster. Anyone who has any news for inclusion in ATG or the website can Contact me at: highwoods.photographic@talktalk.net or call me on: 01206 852353 or 07764852337.

Arnold Phipps-Jones
Press Officer
www.essexbigga.co.uk

Around the Green



SURREY

Sunday April 6. It has just stopped snowing and here in Banstead we have had about three inches of the stuff. It even settled on the roads so my trip to a tile shop in Reigate was a carefully driven outing. I know you're all wandering why is Brian wanting to buy tiles, so I'm going to tell you, but not yet. Gone are my days of writing incessantly about myself and my holidays, etc. That little reminder from our Secretary in the last mail out certainly made me think that it was perhaps a little selfish to bore you month after month with my comings and goings.

On Tuesday April 8, when you all go off and play in this year's first golf day at Royal Laleham GC, I and my family including the mother-in-law, the grandchildren, my two daughters and partners and my son-in-law's mother and father are going down to Studland Bay in Dorset, I believe I mentioned it in last month's edition, for a few days vacation so this weather had better change or there'll be no undressing on the beach for me this year.

Darren Woodward, Course Manager at Tylney Park GC, telephoned me last week with the news that his wife, Fiona, had given birth to his first son, Samuel Lewes, 7lb 10ozs, on March 18.

Darren said it was a sun roof birth and that mother and baby are both well. I was drinking tea with Tony Bremer, at Dorking GC, at the time and it wasn't until I had written down all the information that Darren had given me and said goodbye that Tony reminded me that I hadn't asked Darren the name of the father.

I laughed at Tony's little joke but his young assistant, who was drinking tea with us, said it was important to know or the father might feel left out. Les Salmon, who was also there, has had an operation for a new knee about six months ago and maybe at the next golf day, if you play with him, and it's not too stiff, he'll show it to you in the showers.

Please keep letting me know about this sort of exciting news or I will tell you about my trip to the tile shop in Reigate, you have been warned!

Brian Willmott
brian.willmott@hotmail.co.uk



KENT

And so into spring...or so it should be!

As I write this I am watching a good five to six inch covering of snow settle on my course on what should be a very busy weekend!

At least the weather was kind to us when we made our recent pilgrimage to the Mecca of golf in our area at The London Club. Despite many being heavily laden with work duties at our own courses 38 of us could not turn

down the opportunity to take on the challenge of the recently named PGA European Open host course for 2008.

Meeting early in the palatial clubhouse and casting our eyes out over the magnificent surroundings, we couldn't wait to get out there and see how our individual games would fair against such a stiff test. Our very gracious hosts, Peter Todd and Glenn Kirby, were all too happy to explain some of the intricacies involved in preparing a course for such a prestigious event and how they tone it down for when the PGA roll into town! Seriously though, it was fascinating to hear of some of the preparations required for the tournament logistics, hospitality areas, tented villages and road building proving, as Peter said, "The golf course is the easy bit!"

So my companions for the day and I set off for the first tee eager to get started. I must give them credit for inspiring me to play well enough to claim second place overall by generally being great fun. Thanks to Gavin Kinsella, Wayne Syers and Chris Mardon.

Despite the weather being a bit chilly and breezy, we were at least afforded dry conditions for the day and the quality of the course continued right to the last. There can be no doubt whatsoever that the PGA's decision to play this venue can only raise the profile of all Kentish courses and benefit us all in the region.

A superb dinner (what else?) followed our golf. Our hosts were again bombarded with specific questions on how the course would be adapted for the pros during the European Open. As a result, Peter and Glenn have very kindly offered to give us the opportunity to have a course walk on June 18th which is about two weeks prior to the main event so we can see what standards are required on course and how all associated aspects of tournament hosting are organised.

This is planned to start at 4 pm, should last a couple of hours and will be followed by a barbeque. Many thanks to our hosts for this gesture as it will give us a rare insight into major tournament preparation. Incidentally, if anyone wishes to volunteer to assist in the preparation of the course before or during the event then please let me know and I shall pass on any such requests to Peter.

On the day I firmly believe we were all winners as it was such a pleasure playing that course but results were as follows: 1. Malloy Parks, 37pts; 2. Rob Holland 35 pts; 3. Michael Wigstone 32 pts. Longest drive was by Mark Bell and highest cumulative points total on the Par 3s was by Glenn Kirby. Many thanks to our prize providers on the day. They were: Ernest Doe, Rigby Taylor and T. Parker & Sons.

This event was a great start to our year, long may it continue. Congratulations to Peter and Glenn for providing a stunning venue and belated congratulations also to Peter on his BIGGA Vice-Chairmanship appointment. Our next event is at Sundridge Park on the 7th May where we shall meet up at 11 am for a ploughman's lunch followed by 18 holes on the East Course and a dinner in the evening.

Please consult website for entry forms, prices are fixed for the year at £35 Course Managers and Trade members and £30 for Assistants.

Best of British
Rob Holland
www.kentgreenkeepers.co.uk



SOUTH WEST AND SOUTH WALES REGION

- SOUTH WALES

Hi everybody, well I think we have had a typical Spring, 17 degrees one day, snow the next! But at least the sun has some power in it now. At the Grove we are waiting to overseed and top dress and apply our base feed. Our winter lectures are over at Pencoed College. I would like to thank Martin Townsend, Countrywide, for their support and wish him well.

I just wish more of you would attend these lectures as they take a lot of time and effort to organise. It's like Around The Green. It's about your Section and I am sure there are things that go on on your course that maybe of interest to the rest of us, so let's hear about it!

That's it for now lads and lasses. I would like to just say Hello to an old friend of mine and ex-boss, Walter Jones, Walter was Head Greenkeeper at Southerndown GC in the 70s and I was his First Assistant. He contacted me after reading about Norma in the mag. He is 97 now and we said we would meet up and have lunch looking forward to it Walter.

Ok, you lot by the time you read this we will be looking forward to our Spring tournament at Ash so let's see more off you.

News and views (no matter how small) to henry@henrystead.wanadoo.co.uk. and remember keep smiling.

Henry Stead



DEVON AND CORNWALL

Our March get together took place at Royal North Devon on the 12th. Unfortunately the weather was against us, although generally dry it was very windy (not ideal for seaside links!) Nevertheless a good turnout ensured an enjoyable day. Our sponsors for this meeting we're Vitax and Bayer represented by Mike King and Paul Clifton respectively, our thanks once again to them. A warm welcome was given to Jane Jones, our Regional Administrator, who joined us for the day. We also had some of our golf club Captains, Secretaries, etc as guests for the day.

The competition among our golfers was won by Gavin Moore, Launceston GC, with 27pts, 2. Andrew Prowse, Porthpean GC, 25pts, 3. Andrew Dunstan (on countback) also with 25pts - very commendable considering the conditions. The Longest Drive up the last was won by one of my playing partners Andy (rarely out of the prizes) Parker from Crediton and nearest the pin was won by another steady eddie Gordon Tamlyn, from Mullion.

The course walk was well supported as we we're joined by Bob Taylor from STRI. Our thanks to Mark Evans (Course Manager) and his team for the courtesy of the course for the day and the wonderful condition it was in. I would also like to extend our thanks to the catering staff for the excellent meal and service and to Royal North Devon for their warm welcome.

The afternoon talk was given by Bob Taylor on ecology and was very topical and educational, our thanks to Bob for his time. During the afternoon a plaque was presented to Steve Evans for his dedication to the section over the last 17 years where he has served in many roles including Secretary and Chairman. Our thanks to Steve for all his efforts.

A few items of news to report, a belated congratulations to John Bullen, Course Manager at Staddon Heights, and his wife on the birth of their baby daughter. I was down in Cornwall on my travels recently and called into see one of the Course Managers who I'd heard had recently sprouted wings! Jim, at Truro, was 50 (sorry Jim) last week and with the help of his family fulfilled a long term ambition of doing a parachute jump! The whole event was filmed on dvd and before he knew it was appearing on a well known website where mad people doing mad things can be seen! Well done mate and happy birthday!

Our summer meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 23at Lanhydrock. Look forward to seeing you all there.

Finally, during the year the winners of most of the golf competitions are presented with cups or shields. If you are currently in possession of one of these, or know who is can you let me know please.

Email greenwaysjrc@aol.com or phone 07764 224582 if you have any news.

Jerry Cole



SOUTH WEST

Question - What could possibly be more fiendishly difficult than deep linear aerating 36 greens with a Graden scarifier?

Answer - A Graden scarifier fitted with a sand injector - that's what. Couple that with a gale force wind blowing relentlessly the whole time and you start to get the picture. We used 2.5 tonnes of kiln dried sand per green - every last grain of which had to be carried across the green in buckets by a dedicated team of greenkeepers. There was also the small matter of tidying up afterwards - scraping off and shovelling away by hand. Good fun. As we staggered in at the end of day two - one of the lads was heard to mutter - "It'd better be bl**dy well worth it"!

Also did a few greens with the Gwaze system - compressed air injection has come a long way - it only took around 15 minutes to complete an average sized green with almost no surface disturbance. I say almost no disturbance - the air force is so powerful, that in the odd place or two it actually "blew-up" the surface of the green in the most spectacular fashion. The operator wasn't aware of the explosions behind him until the clods started hitting him on the back of the neck! Just shows the compacted nature of the ground. With a little gentle turf-beating, the green was restored, and play recommenced.

The inaugural Frank Newberry Management Masterclass was held at Minchinhampton Golf Club recently. I was reminded that the day I originally got in touch with Frank to set things up was back in January, and was the one snowy day of the entire winter. I rang Frank on his mobile, and when the call eventually connected Frank said - "Don't worry about the background

Around the Green



noise, I'm just walking down the street". I looked at the snow and hail beating against my office window and said - "I hope you've got a decent umbrella." He said "No - a parasol actually - I'm in Gran Canaria with the Norwegian Greenkeepers and it's 28 degrees!"

It definitely wasn't 28 degrees on the day of the Masterclass itself - things got off to a bad start when Franks Sat-Nav took him to the middle of Minchinhampton Common, and then left him there! Matters went from bad to worse, when for some inexplicable reason none of the electric points in the clubhouse were working. Not too easy to give a Powerpoint without the Power bit. However, we're made of sterner stuff and overcame these tiny difficulties for a first rate day which was thoroughly enjoyed by all. We hope very much to run series two in the winter, so if you're up for a little honing of those Management Skills - drop me a mail to register interest.

Very hopeful to run a turf clinic afternoon at Chippenham Golf Club in June. Watch this space for further details, and this day will also be publicised via the Golf Unions direct to your Secretary's office, and on the BIGGA website in the Education section.

Excavator Safety Training is complete for the Spring - 21 greenkeepers plus a celebrity, Dave Saltman M.D. of Pitchcare, got safely through the training. Well done to all and thanks to all those who helped. We'll run again in the autumn on demand - please let me know any interest.

The first match of the season is looming at Stinchcombe Hill Golf Club on June 5. Do give Team Captain Wayne "The Special One" Vincent a ring 07958 630590 - He and "Sir Alex" Garland will no doubt select the best team available to them (although they'll have to go some to beat the £5 million strike partnership of Cristiano Pring and Carlos Greaves from last year).

Finally had a great laugh the other day along the lines of the Radio 5 news presenter who "corpsed" (collapsed with laughter) live on air one day last week, and couldn't finish reading the news.

I was waiting patiently in the Pro-shop for a word with the Pro, and the customer in front was being really rude & awkward. He was an elderly short guy who claimed to have ordered two electric hire buggies for his round, but no-one could find a record of the order, and the buggies weren't ready. Eventually, he was being so rude and bloody-minded, the Pro patiently said - "okay - so that's two buggies in the name of Mr.. er..?" The answer was quick in coming - "Shufflebottom". There was a moment of stunned silence, and then the first snigger in the queue behind him. Within seconds most people, including me and the Pro, were gasping for air. Fortunately, Mr Shufflebottom somehow affected not to notice.

Hope by the time this hits the shelves the weather'll have sorted itself out, and we've got some nice warm spring conditions. Today (the day of writing) is April 8 and the temp was -4.5C on the way to work this morning. Just had a quick glance back in the records, and you have to go back to 1996 to get anywhere near that.

I'll look forward to welcoming you at Minchinhampton Old Course on May 13 for the Greenkeeper- Amateur. No cows, so no need to bring shovels or wellies - "Brown Friday" (when they are let out) is not 'till the 15th this year so we should be okay.

Paul Worster
paulw@mgcnew.co.uk 01453 837355.

SOUTH COAST SECTION

Well this is a bit of a quiet time for news in the Section. However, as a reminder the match with the Secretaries is fast approaching and is to be held at Brockenhurst GC on Wednesday, June 4.

As I write this column it is currently snowing outside so I sincerely hope that the weather has warmed up by the time you read the column in the magazine!

The Tournament Organiser is Kevan Glass. Please contact Kevan if you wish to book or pay for any of the Section's Golf Days at the following address: Apartment 1, Forge Side Court, Lepe Road, Langley, Southampton SO45 1SS or on mobile 07859 053054 or on e-mail: glassy2003@hotmail.com.

One piece of news is that I have changed employers and have gone back to work for Vitax Ltd. Please note the new mobile number below, which I can be contacted on if you have any information for the magazine column. While I'm on this topic, it would be brilliant if you can let me know any news you have or acquire regarding the section, it makes the reading a bit less dry and gets me away from a list of Golf Day dates and information. Please have a think and pass on anything you think would be good to include and spread to the Section membership.

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Section Notes -

Can all notes be emailed to: melissa@bigga.co.uk
by the 5th of the month prior to publication please.
Suggested word guide: 500



TURNING JAPANESE

Laurence Pithie reports from the inaugural Greenkeeper Conference and Show in Japan

In February this year, I had the pleasure of returning to Japan, this time as an invited speaker for the inaugural National Greenkeeper Conference & Trade Show. This article also acts as a follow-up to the ones produced in GI in 2006.

The NGK Conference was held in Kobe, a port city 300 miles west of Tokyo. This is a large city, previously devastated by an earthquake in January 1995. Apart from a memorial and a small section of seafront which serves as a reminder, it is hard to find any remains of the chaos and damage that ensued. The Conference was organised by Pacific Golf Management, one of two large management companies in Japan which either own or operate around 250 golf courses; this representing about 10% of the golf courses in Japan. With support from International companies such as Toro, Jacobsen, John Deere, Syngenta and Bernhards, there was representation from 'local' companies such as GK, ASI & Riken Green to name a few. The Trade Show was small in comparison to both BTME & GIS but it was a first and about 40 exhibitors were present plus media coverage from within Japan. Jim Prusa, an ex GCSAA executive, Mike Heacock & Steve Wilson, all from PGM were the principle organisers and superbly aided by a host of Course Managers and interpreters.

The main objective for this Conference was to try and bring about change. In Japan, there is no greenkeeping education system, no association and therefore very little sharing of information. Networking between individuals is next to non-existent with the result that many 'keepers' work in isolation

from each other. With minimal external influence, the greenkeepers have a limited understanding of conditions or techniques outside of Japan. Most of the knowledge gained has largely been from the US. However, it must be stated that golf course condition and presentation is still of a high standard and as I said in the previous article, it probably falls somewhere between that of the UK and the US. Staffing levels and budgets are of course much higher than the majority of clubs in the UK and service standards are as good as any I have witnessed during my travels.

Conference week started on the Sunday with a ceremonial opening performed by a strange mix of a Scottish marching band of pipes & drums, young & old, led by a Samurai warrior. This representing the link between the home of golf and that of an enlarging golf market in Asia. Introductions were read out by Jim Prusa, the pride of place being from Gordon Moir, from St. Andrews, followed by encouraging letters from both BIGGA & the GCSAA, a nice touch. Such camaraderie within the golf industry is the essence of what makes this such a special industry and helps unite Greenkeepers from all corners of the globe. Locally run Seminars covering a variety of subjects such as 'converting Korai greens to Bentgrass' followed over a two day period.

Afterwards and on Monday evening, the Trade Show was formally opened with a ribbon cutting ceremony performed by various dignitaries. The main day of the Trade Show was on Tuesday which attracted a steady flow of interested visitors. A keynote speech by Marty Kuehnert, a well known Baseball Team manager and presenter in Japan, ended the day's session.



His presentation in fluent Japanese was very good and relevant to the challenges faced today.

Wednesday was leisure day during the Conference week, with over 120 delegates heading into the mountains to play in an organised golf tournament. Near blizzard conditions greeted our arrival as we made our ascent in five coaches from Osaka. To say that the course was challenging was an understatement. The 36 hole Daitakarazuka course was re-modelled under the guidance of David Dale, an accomplished architect who for many years worked with Ron Fream. This was not only a test of architecture but a feat of engineering, especially to install a full length cart path around all 36 holes. The changes in elevation were considerable and to walk this course would not be feasible. During the round, several brief snow showers were encountered and earlier that morning, the staff moved overnight snow from some sheltered tees. All in all it was a wonderful experience and only three balls were lost to the mountains.

The last two days consisted of workshops with several subjects being covered. This time, there was more of an international mix of speakers from Japan, the US and Europe, the latter consisting of myself and Stephen Bernhard. Having presented numerous seminars and workshops over the past few years, I found this to be more of a challenge considering the inevitable language barrier. However, thanks to efficient technical support and assistance from two female interpreters who spoke excellent English, the whole day ran as smooth as any previously.

The subjects I presented consisted of a brief history of golf to where we are now, a UK overview, cultural practices and feeding programs, an environmental case study and finally the typical challenges and solutions encountered in the UK. All subjects covered were as a request from the organisers. Subjects covered by others included Golf Course Design, Basic Soil Science and Modern Golf Course Management. The main difference I found that due to the language barrier, it was difficult to interact with the

delegates and to gauge their feedback. The main Q&A tended to centre on the question of Poa annua and Environmental issues. The latter being more of a curiosity at this stage to the Japanese but one that they are becoming increasingly aware of.

I also had the opportunity to visit two other courses plus a driving range. The latter was most impressive, in spite of only being 200 yards long. It was fully enclosed and the structured netting is computer operated which can be lowered when typhoons hit the shoreline. The two tier driving range, complete with power tees, also featured overhead fans and heaters, plus comfortable chairs and tables complete with drinks holders. The target greens were composed of raised artificial types, with ball removal 'switch' which knocked the balls into the lower areas for automatic collection. This was most impressive and an integral restaurant serving excellent food made for a very enjoyable experience. A digi-card system was in use so the customer has several options on how many balls to purchase, what time of day suits best and the card can be used again if there are still balls remaining. All in all, this range was of a very high standard and more advanced than any I have seen in the UK.

The two other courses I visited were Ark Yokawa and Shinyu, both set into hillsides. All consisted of Zoysia, Korai on tees and fairways and Noshiha on surrounds and roughs. My previous articles alluded to the fact that this is a tough grass to cut and I can verify it is also tough to play from. Divots fragment but recovery is fast during the growing season. In the winter and as with all warm season grasses, Zoysia is completely dormant and both courses had the look of being wiped out with glyphosate although both were in fine condition and clean and tidy at that. The higher end courses tend to spray the fairways with a green dye colourant, complete with about 3% Iron which gives six to eight weeks benefit. Visually this is more attractive and is applied at 10lts per ha. Divoting of tees and fairways was almost a daily occurrence, but then mowing is virtually non-existent for at least four months. Soil temperatures need to be about 18 Celsius before the Zoysia greens up; this usually around late April in the main part of central Japan.



On all courses, the Bentgrass greens were firm and in general receive more frequent sand dressings than those in the UK. Of course feeding levels for Bent is higher, namely about 200 kgs per ha (20 gms per m² or roughly 3lbs N per 1000 sq ft). Due to the narrowness of many fairways in Japan, often barely 30 yards wide and with steep slopes on either side, many holes have internal boundaries or OB's as called in Japan. A local rule is then used to play another ball, complete with penalty shots from a marked area of the fairway. This is to help speed up play otherwise a round of golf could take all day.

Staffing levels average between 8 and 18 (depending on course standard) per 18 hole golf course, with virtually all greenkeepers in full time employment. Due to the social and moral responsibilities of clubs and companies in Japan, this is common and the payback is total loyalty and dedication. It was noticeable that very few young people work on golf courses, most preferring to work in the cities. Equipment levels are also higher than in the UK and maintenance buildings often twice the size as we are accustomed to.

Golf in Japan is as popular as ever but remains an expensive game. Few courses cost less than £80 per round although that often includes golf cart and lunch.

Since rounds in Japan often take 6 hours to play, it is common practice to play 9 holes, stop for lunch, then continue to play the back 9. A full day out on the course may not suit all tastes and as witnessed in the UK, the time taken to play golf is a key issue for customer retention.

The start made in hosting a first 'BTME' style conference will hopefully bring greenkeepers closer together and eventually lead an Association being formed, thereby bringing the benefits of education and the sharing of information. This is intended to be an annual event and looking at how quickly Japan has developed in other ways, there is every probability that this will happen. My thanks go the organisers of this event who will hopefully be visiting our shores in the near future.

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QUICK NINE HOLE QUIZ

1. Georgia
2. David Beckham
3. Celtic
4. Inter-City Fairs Cup
5. Netherlands
6. Panthers
7. USA
8. Japan and South Korea
9. Chamonix, France

MONSTER SUDOKU

5	7	3	C	4	2	1	9	A	B	8	6
1	A	6	4	3	8	7	B	5	9	2	C
B	8	9	2	C	6	5	A	4	7	1	3
6	5	1	9	2	3	A	C	7	8	B	4
3	4	2	B	6	9	8	7	C	1	A	5
8	C	A	7	B	5	4	1	9	3	6	2
A	6	7	3	5	1	B	4	2	C	9	8
4	1	B	5	8	C	9	2	3	6	7	A
2	9	C	8	7	A	3	6	B	5	4	1
9	2	8	1	A	7	C	3	6	4	5	B
7	3	4	A	1	B	6	5	8	2	C	9
C	B	5	6	9	4	2	8	1	A	3	7

SQUIGGLY SUDOKU

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4	2	7	3	1	9	8	5	6
2	9	6	5	4	3	7	1	8
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8	3	4	9	5	1	6	7	2
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9	4	1	7	8	2	3	6	5
1	5	3	2	6	8	4	9	7

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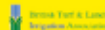
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Growing success

AUGUSTA SYNDROME – GREENKEEPING IN THE SPRING IN THE UK

As I'm writing this article we're all no doubt watching The Masters from Augusta. I'm sure you'll agree a fantastic event at a very special place. I was lucky enough to visit a couple of years ago and it really is as good as it looks on television.

It is a unique club and to have a comparison in the UK market is probably unrealistic and very few clubs could be looking to achieve their standards. I think it is down to us as greenkeepers to provide our memberships with some education in terms of labour costs and expenses that go in to making it such a great golf course, for our clubs to be asking UK greenkeepers to achieve that standard and quality in golf course really is quite unrealistic, and would cost a fortune, a cost that could only be met by memberships having to finance.

In the current climate we are certainly not seeing that type of investment and a lot of members clubs are starting to struggle as people start to make their choices in terms of offers along with internet exposure it is easy to play wherever you want to and at great rates.

I think this is probably the hardest time of the year in terms of greenkeeping. The Spring often throws up a number of variables, weather wise - snow, rain, cold ground temperatures, some warmer days it really is difficult, and golfers' expectations are high especially as we had an early Easter holidays.

Soil temperatures are down in comparison to 2007 and this adds to the problem, I know how hard this is myself as I have had to put on European Tour events for the first week in May for four or five years running and the challenge of achieving a tournament standard golf course through this period, is a challenge I have to say I don't miss.

The usual golfer complaints and bumpy greens, from spring grasses growing at their different rate, the poa, bent and fescue, it really is a difficult job from that point of view to produce consistent putting surfaces and recovery from high levels of winter golf that is responsible for wear and tear around green and tee surrounds that leave most of us open to the critics who do not understand that without temperatures in the soil for fertiliser and overseeding we cannot get the damage repaired.



We also have to do a lot of renovation work within this period as golfers don't want it to be carried out when we are in main season (end of May through September). We are in a situation where the lower green fees coincide with this time, however, the disadvantage is that the recovery time is much longer, but it is another point that needs educating to the masses.

All the planning and organising these dates in a resort while also allowing for golf; there are many problems that we come up against. Golfers don't have to consider that aspect of the decision making and usually it is financial motivation that sets the dates. Again, on reflection in the current climate it is a relevant point as we are all going through some interesting financial challenges.

I will be attending the RA conference at the end of April beginning of May, I am hoping for some good debates and will inform you in my next column from that event.

Budgets vs Costs are beginning to conflict, as fertiliser and chemical costs are rising, managing budgets for this is a struggle and trying to keep pace with rising fuel prices, along with sand, haulage costs, it is difficult, we all need to be good accountants in this current climate and efficient with our spending when managing our purchasing.

I would like to wish Chris Kennedy and his team along with the BIGGA Support Team a successful tournament at Wentworth. Also Jim McKenzie from Celtic Manor a successful Wales Open. As I said earlier, I know how difficult these tournaments are in May and I hope the weather will be with them, I'm sure the courses will look fantastic.

My best wishes to all greenkeepers for the season, and hope that we see an improvement in the weather through to the summer.



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