



# 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