

## Welcome



### A Month of Ups and Downs

August was one of those good month-bad months for the game of golf. Obviously we've been overwhelmed by the Olympics and with golf not an Olympic Sport – if you ask me it never should be, nor should tennis or basketball for that matter – the game hasn't been high profile in August.

But, as I say, there were reasons for genuine elation but also for depression all wrapped up in one 31 day period.

First the good news. Pdraig Harrington's emergence as a genuine golfing superstar.

There are those who argue that his Open win at Carnoustie last year was more of a case of stumbling over the line than a triumphant march towards the Claret Jug. That may be true but this year's Open win at Royal Birkdale was much more convincing and we saw signs of Harrington becoming one of those players who can do exactly what they want when the pressures are at their most intense.

Those signs grew in size - and added neon to make them even more obvious - at the US PGA Championship when he came from no-where, he was in danger of missing the cut at one stage, and absolutely dominated Sergio Garcia and Ben Curtis over the back nine to win his third Major. Anyone who looked at his eyes over the closing four holes, in particular, could see a fire burning that probably only Tiger could extinguish.

The phrase "role model" is vastly overused, but it is fair to say that Pdraig Harrington is exactly what British and Irish golf, needs at the moment – a good guy who gets every ounce from himself in terms of achievement and a man who other people can relate to.

That's the good news. The bad news has been yet another year of awful summer weather. I was on holiday for the first half of August but learning what the weather was like back home made me shudder. Having got back midway through the month the weather hadn't improved and I'm sure there are a large number of courses which have been closed for a period during August.

That's what we don't need. Golf clubs need revenue from visitors and societies and lousy weather doesn't encourage casual golfers to hit the fairways – even if beleaguered courses have been able to remain open for play. Coming on the back of last year, which was the wettest summer since I don't know when and revenue was down, we really needed a bumper summer and that having failed to materialise it may well lead to calls to cut budgets.

Cries that standards are slipping will no doubt follow but golfers will need to get real and appreciate that Course Managers can only do as much as is possible from the resources he or she is given. Any reduction in resource will inevitably mean less can be done. It shouldn't be too hard a concept to grasp.

Just time to wish Europe's Ryder Cup team good fortune at Valhalla and to pass on best wishes to Superintendent, Mark Wilson, and his team for the final preparations and the week itself.

## DEVELOPMENTS AT VITAX

Clive Williams retired in August after 39 years in the industry. Having worked for many major players, he joined Vitax Ltd as Commercial Development Manager in 1998 spearheading the company's expansion and significantly increasing the Vitax product range. So much so that following his departure two separate divisions will be created and the post divided between two personnel.

Mike King, heads the new Supaturf Division as Sales and Marketing Manager, covering the whole of the UK (including Southern Ireland) and dealing with Local Authorities and Contractors. Having joined Vitax three years ago from Supaturf, Mike will be in charge of a team of four with special responsibility for the Supaturf range of line-marking paints and chemical and line-marking sprayers. Mike started out in horticulture before moving into amenity and brings over 20 years experience to the post.

Joe Crawley, who recently returned to the company to accept a post with greater responsibility, will be in charge of a new Fine Turf Division developing business, introducing new products and offering technical advice through Vitax Amenity's established UK distributor network. Joe will answer to the title of Sales and Marketing Manager – Fine Turf Division.

Clive Williams is delighted with the expansion of the Vitax team. "Mike and Joe are two well deserving young men," he said. He is looking forward to a retirement full of French travel, fine wines and good food.



Clive Williams



Mike King



Joe Crawley

## PGA LAUNCHES POWERPLAY GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP

The PGA has added a new Championship to its 2008 schedule, featuring PowerPlay Golf - the exciting new 9-hole format featuring two flags on every green.

With a total prize fund of £34,000, the PGA PowerPlay Golf Championship 2008 offers one of the PGA's most attractive purses. It incorporates three regional qualifying rounds - with 24 golfers from each making it through to a £25,000 grand final.

In PowerPlay Golf, double Stableford points are awarded for birdies or better to the more difficult black 'PowerPlay' flags. Golfers must take exactly three PowerPlays during their first eight holes, with an optional PowerPlay at greater risk on the final hole, but need to choose carefully when to attack the course and when to defend their score.

The three regional qualifiers are at: Midlands: Bransford GC, Worcs – Tuesday, August 26; North: Oulton Hall GC, West Yorks – Tuesday, September 2; South: Wildwood GC, Surrey – Thursday, September 11

The final is at Frilford Heath Golf Club, Oxfordshire, on Tuesday, October 7.