



On the Soapbox

A new vehicle for people within the industry to express their viewpoint

One Saturday morning back in October I had just returned from the golf club. As usual I suspected that the course was probably in reasonably good nick but all I saw as I went round were the things which could be better - the curse of the Course Manager.

Never mind, get the wet socks off and put the kettle on, the world will seem a better place after that.

My 20-year-old daughter looked chirpy and well after another night on the town (I vaguely remember when I could do that) and with a good-morning smile handed me my post and a cup of tea.

The BIGGA mag and a cup of tea on a Saturday morning, what could be better?

I tore off the polythene to tip out the bump.

Ah, what's this? Continue To Learn education programme 2010.

Anything new and different? Is Frank on? God bless Frank.

I skim through. Ah ha! - Wednesday morning 8.20 to 10.30, 2mm mowing, fescue/bent et al.

We are invited to discuss and debate the merits of 2mm and 5mm mowing and 'the issues involved to succeed with each'. 'To succeed with each!' My heart sinks. I ask myself, 'What is there left to debate?' This seems to be self indulgence of the highest order.

The news puts me in something of a dilemma. At a time when all industries are seeking to minimise global damage for the sake of our children's future, should we as a profession be hosting a debate which suggests that we might wish to consider mowing even lower?

I am all for free speech and defend the right of any greenkeeper to maintain their course as they see fit but for any practice which could have far-reaching consequences for our profession I would want some time-tested theories and scientific back up before we legitimise it at our national conference.

Professional seedsmen, agronomists, architects and constructors stipulate and deliver to golf course greens, fescue and bent seed or turf.

Professional greenkeepers are employed to develop these into mature golf greens consisting of the aforementioned perennial sportsturf grasses - 'simples' as meerkat might say.

Research and past history clearly show that low mowing will strongly favour annual

meadowgrass over fescue/bent. If we are to deliver our remit as professional greenkeepers and provide greens based on perennial sportsturf grasses, the real art of greenkeeping, what is there to debate?

For an agronomic debate you need two reasonably sound scientific theories backed up by evidence.

We seem to be 50% short.

Now I know that professionalism has taken a bit of a dive these days, with the 'Hand of Henri' and In Eduardo's case, quite literally, as he did his dying swan act in the Celtic penalty box, but surely professional greenkeepers should not need to be debating the merits of 2mm mowing.

The thought that we should contemplate heading into the next decade on the basis of ultra low-mown swards, with all their attendant high cost, high maintenance, high input, high irrigation and pesticide requirement is hardly the socially responsible thing to do and gives a very false impression of the environmentally aware state of the British

same today not like back in my day when we had The Beatles versus The Rolling Stones.

At last I have a debate and as she points out 'As children are the product of their parents, if you win the debate you have failed as a parent'.

She has got me there. I console myself with the thought that while I may sometimes fail in my struggle to convert poa greens to fescue/bent, I have obviously not failed as a parent. The student has outwitted the teacher. That is as it should be, I have done a good job.

Roll on the football tonight and the weekly debate about divers and professionalism. The odd diver might win the game for his team occasionally but give me Ryan Giggs any day.

There's a fescue/bent man if ever I saw one.

'And if you tolerate this

Then your children will be next

Will be next, will be next, will be next'

Should we tolerate this?

greenkeeping profession today. Why are we debating it? The logic escapes me.

The noble profession of greenkeeping is the sound practice of preparing perennial sportsturf grasses for the game of golf.

The act of routine mowing at 2mm constitutes the stressing out of perennial sportsturf grasses in favour of a weedgrass, a bastardisation of the profession. What's to debate?

Ah well, the tea was refreshing and my feet have warmed up. The wife has fed the rabbits and we are off to do the weekly at Tesco's.

As usual, I will point out all the cheap items that taste just as good and she, the professional shopper, will tell me to read the label and see just how much salt, sugar and fat I would be pouring in to me and my daughter's bodies and what the eventual outcome would be.

She is right of course. I don't bother to debate the point. There is only one side to the argument and that does not constitute a debate.

I lure my daughter over to the array of CDs and tell her that they all sound the



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The views expressed within On The Soapbox are not necessarily those of Greenkeeper International