



Chairman's Word

National Chairman, Peter Todd, gives his thoughts for the month

Many of you will have experienced the stop/start growth conditions at the start of the season with some reasonable growing conditions during the first half of April followed by inconsistent growth in the following three weeks.

The gusting easterly winds in early May soon dried out the turf surface stressing the plant and this coupled with low overnight temperatures caused this early growth period to rapidly go into reverse.

With little response from the bentgrasses and Poa seeding prolifically the challenge was on to produce a good putting surface.

We had previously hosted tournaments in the months June, August and September with more growing period to work with, so I was under no illusions about the May date this year and the challenge we faced.



The European Open Support Team will no doubt have done a great job this year

Chuck out your 2009 calendar now!

This Spring required different thinking to prepare The International Course for normal play as well as The Heritage for The European Open. From listening to others the first thing to learn is to ignore which month the calendar says it is when it comes to timing work and concentrate on what the weather and growing conditions are actually doing.

I have known us use modest amounts of irrigation as early as March one year when the plant was desiccating and this year getting wetting agents on early and the use of irrigation as soon as the very dry conditions limited growth certainly helped to reduce turf stress.

Monitoring air and soil temperatures along with daily E.T. levels soon provides the answers you might have to questions such as, Why have my greens stopped growing? What we are not able to do is increase the temperatures?

So taking advantage of every window when these are in our favour, and the use of fertilisers that respond in the prevailing conditions, becomes a must. Knowing when not to do things equally becomes important, such as too early an application of PGRs or using verti-cuts.

With golfers out playing en masse this spring in the sunny, dry conditions their expectations continued to rise as daytime

temperatures at times almost gave the impression summer had arrived.

Despite the fact that they all probably went home afterwards to a centrally heated house for the evening it wouldn't have occurred to them that cold nights affected the greens that they had been playing on that day.

While there are limiting factors to what can be done including the weather, manpower, budgets etc, we still have to produce as good a surface as we can, taking advantage of any opportunities to improve playing conditions.

Let's be honest, ultimately customers are not that interested in what goes on to produce results on the course and the variables that determine the level of success are not all in our control. As golfers expectations have continued to rise consistently, managing these is important now more than ever, as budgets come under pressure.

Where significant reductions in budgets are impacting on some courses' greenkeeping standards it is crucial to communicate the impact of these cut backs in writing to management or committees, including any restrictions placed upon you to carry out greens renovations.

In these circumstances, doing the best job you can on the golf course with the resources available on the golf course is not

enough without also communicating well. Golfers need to feel that the fee they have paid to play is value for money in their eyes, and reflects what they have experienced on the course. We need to make sure it does.

I cannot sign off without thanking my team, all the greenkeepers who volunteered to work at The European Open and to the clubs that released their staff to gain tournament experience with us.

With greenkeepers coming from clubs throughout the country and as far away as Scotland and Ireland it is very rewarding to share our experiences and learn from one another. I would also like to thank all the suppliers who provided additional support for the event that make that important difference.

We remain a close knit industry and it is at tournament times this shines through with great camaraderie on display. I look forward to meeting all the BIGGA Open Support team at Turnberry alongside George and Euan's staff and wish them well for The Open Championship.

Peter Todd
National Chairman