



Chairman's Word

BIGGA Chairman Paul Worster looks at how we can respond to career challenges in the recession

Best wishes from us all, John

May I acknowledge the efforts of outgoing BIGGA CEO – John Pemberton. As our CEO since 2004, John has helped BIGGA develop into what it is today. John is wished well by all.

I recently met some terrific guys at The Berkshire for the National Championship, sponsored by Kubota and Charterhouse. Decent, grass-roots greenkeepers with whom we all identify.

Greenkeepers with a natural aptitude for their work, and who look forward to a successful career with opportunities for progression and job security.

Has advancement suddenly become more difficult?

In recent times has job advancement become more difficult, and job security become a thing of the past?

Redundancies, cost saving measures and job sharing are becoming more commonplace in the golf sector, and Greens Teams have to do more with less.

Normal levels of movement within greenkeeping have been reduced. Will this potentially stifle careers? Will greenkeepers get into a rut? How then to break the cycle?

A number I spoke to had clear ideas on how to progress.

- They were beginning to attend local BIGGA Section events
- They were beginning to volunteer for the association
- They were beginning to get themselves noticed.

My advice to anyone in a situation of insecurity and stagnation - take every possible development opportunity, and get yourself out and about.

Your competitors for good jobs are doing just that!

If advancement opportunities are limited then get trained and make your career aspirations known to others so that when a vacancy does occur you are among the best qualified.

Your current situation does not have to be a cul-de-sac – it can be a two-way street for you.

You can attend this FREE seminar

At Harrogate Week in January BIGGA is running an excellent Development Seminar for Assistant Greenkeepers. You can attend this FREE seminar but you will need to enroll in advance.

There will be a Volunteers Workshop to help you to become a much valued volunteer. Again it is a FREE seminar but you will need to enroll in advance. BIGGA is the world's largest membership organisation for greenkeepers at all levels. If you attend, then BIGGA will be there for you - whatever your current position in the greenkeeping profession.

Greenkeepers are the prime focus of the Association

By the time this article is published, there will be some changes to the way that BIGGA does things. The BIGGA Board has been working hard to ensure that greenkeepers are the prime focus of the Association's efforts.

BIGGA Sub-Committees have been converted into Advisory Groups, each one working with a Volunteer Board Director, who through the Board and CEO supports the relevant BIGGA Head of Department. This approach empowers the Association's employees while at the same time making them more accountable to your Board.

In addition, Past Chairmen of the Association have been invited to become special advisors to the Board.

Do Greenkeepers need to broaden their horizons?

Absolutely! If we want a good career and job security we will always need to look outwards.

BIGGA intends to reach out into the wider industry and forge much closer links with the likes of the IOG, the GTC, the PGA, the GCMA, the Golf Unions and the R&A to form an alliance that will have much more clout.

Finally, this column would not be complete without me paying tribute to the efforts of the greens teams helping out at the Ryder Cup at Celtic Manor.

You do not need me to describe the scene inside the Greenkeeper Facility. Incessant rain drumming on the roof and a constant and intense pressure to get the event played. What a moment for UK Greenkeeping!

Cometh the hour – Cometh the man (Jim McKenzie - Superintendent). Cometh the Support Team also – the effort needed was immense and exhausting.

For me it brought to mind lines from the famous poem – 'IF' - by Rudyard Kipling: (which I actually have pinned on my office wall)

"If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster, and treat those two imposters just the same...."

Could this be a watershed moment for UK Greenkeeping?

If we apply Kipling's sentiment to conditions at the Ryder Cup: What if the weather had not been so bad? The greens team would not have been under quite the same spotlight.

Arguably, because of the conditions, the greenkeeping team turned what might have been complete disaster, into shining triumph. The fact that they responded so completely and comprehensively will be forever remembered by those who were there that week and those who watched it on TV around the world.

Could this be a watershed moment for UK Greenkeeping? I certainly think so. Well done to everyone involved and thanks from all the profession.

The inspirational poem ends:

"If you can fill the unforgiving minute, with sixty seconds worth of distance run, yours is the earth and everything that's in it, and, which is more; you'll be a man – my son"

May I add a personal word - I hope that at this time of uncertainty we greenkeepers will never give up – never back off – and never betray our principles.

Please note that any member can contact the Chairman directly and privately at: talktopaul@hotmail.co.uk