



# On the Soapbox

**Pete Smith, Course Manager of Cavendish Golf Club, in Derbyshire, takes to the Soapbox to share his thoughts**

**“Scott here”, read the email, “need some help. You always said you fancied doing a soapbox piece, you’ve always got an opinion!”**

**Now my time has come, I am not sure I want my thoughts broadcast, and what would I write about that has not been said already by my peers and colleagues alike? Here goes!**

## **Thought 1. I love this job!**

Like many I somewhat fell into greenkeeping, but what a job to fall into, If you like unpredictability, constant challenges and working in the elements! Do you like it? Yes, we all moan, the weather never does what we want it too, the members never understand, the committee won’t give us what we want! But are these not the challenges that bring us back every day? Not knowing what the weather will do, having to educate the members as to the challenges we face and why we do the things that we do, convincing the committee that we do need that machine?

Is all this not worth it for those perfect days, when YOU KNOW the course is at its best, the weather is good and you can sit back from that view point on the course and think...me and my team are responsible for this! What a job to have!

## **Thought 2. Education.**

The unsung heroes! The mere word Master Greenkeeper, stirs emotions in some, but what exactly does it entail, and is it the highest honour? Nights of research and reading, a dedication beyond all others, or merely an award to raise self esteem and pride? Does the title MG mean anything to me? For those that were prepared to study and further themselves I have only admiration, I withdrew from the process as I was not prepared to study to the detriment of my spare time with the family, but my real thoughts are to those unsung heroes, they are the ones that are at the top of this profession, they deserve the highest accolade for their influence on many.

Anyone who is prepared to train, motivate, influence and guide others to better themselves deserves far more recognition than the letters MG can ever carry. I was lucky enough to start out at East Sussex National, during construction through to the second European Open, during that eight years I was influenced by many good

greenkeepers either positively or negatively, all under the stewardship of the two Kens - Siems, and then, Barber.

In that time out of all the full time staff, I can count over a dozen of us that have gone on to become successful Course Managers, and that figure does not include the students who came to us.

To me it is people like the two Kens who are at the top of this profession, at the time they were prepared to take on new challenges and push new boundaries, and by doing so they inspired and influenced a generation of greenkeepers.

## **Thought 3. Get off my land!**

Sometimes I feel that too many of my colleagues have the, “Get off my land!” mentality. Yes we are custodians of the land, and charged to look after it, but we should remember we are in a public service industry. It is our job to prepare the course for play, to a standard that our members have

requested or desire, and not to a standard that we decide is best for them!

## **Thought 4. It’s the end result that matters!**

Push up greens, USGA greens, organics, compounds, feed and water, dry and lean, 2mm or 6mm, micro biology or just kick the dirt and think it looks ok? Even in my time there have been so many versions of doing the same job, whether you agree with what the person at the course down the road is doing or not, are their members happy? If they are then does it matter how they gets results?

I know what you are thinking, yes it does matter if it is not sustainable, but let them find that out, let that course realise it was never sustainable - you can never turn a blind horse! His time will pass; we should concentrate on getting our houses in order and making sure our end results are as good as our members require.

Whatever we feel our limitations may be, there is always a way forward, sometimes we have to look at others for inspiration,

maybe, just maybe, that person we have been scolding for not pursuing the ideal will be right, maybe they have been brave enough to push the boundaries, just maybe they might be your inspiration!

## **Final Thought. I feel the first knife!**

I can see it now, “Thanks Scott, I wish I had never done it, I’m an outcast!” But that’s why I love this industry, we all have different thoughts, different sites that bring different soil and weather, we have different requirements from users of our courses, and different views on how we present our courses.

We have a freedom to try new techniques of maintenance and presentation, we work with nature, and can influence our little piece off the planet, we have the ability to look and gain ideas from other courses, there is no black and white in this industry, only green, and how we get green is down to us, so long as its green, I love this job!

## First thought? *I love this job*



Pete Smith, Course Manager of Cavendish Golf Club, in Derbyshire

*Pete Smith*

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