



Greenkeepers Training Committee

Donald Steel, GTC Chairman, returns with a monthly update



Trust the talents of the greenkeeper

At this time of seasonal goodwill GTC Chairman Donald Steel appeals to all golf course owners, Secretary Managers and Chair of Greens to trust the talents of their Course Manager/Head Greenkeeper

I believe the GTC employer focused workshops are helping to “educate” the golfer on the importance of the employer-Course Manager partnership.

The Prime Minister may not have had greenkeepers in mind when he said in a recent speech “aspiration is the engine of progress”.

However, he might well have done.

One of the virtues of modern greenkeepers that impresses me is their ambition.

Ambition to forge a career on leaving school, ambition for qualifications, ambition to broaden horizons and ambition to seek top jobs.

It is no longer a retreat when all else fails.

In the past, greenkeepers learned largely as they went along.

Most operations had to be carried out by hand and they sweated blood.

Greens were cut with machines that were hard to push and they walked them from green to green, raking a bunker or two on the way.

It is easy to see now that modern greenkeeping has more appeal.

Former generations never complained (well hardly ever!) any more than professional golfers lamented the use of hickory-shafted golf clubs.

It was all they knew.

Even the far-sighted couldn't have envisaged large metal headed woods and driving distances in excess of 350 yards.

Nor could old-time greenkeepers have fast-forwarded their remote controls to contemplate cutting 18 greens in two or three hours or the fleet of sophisticated machinery at their disposal valued perhaps in

excess of half a million pounds.

It is also sobering to look back on the quaint make-up of Green Committees with the Head Greenkeeper nowhere to be seen.

He had to obey committee members' instructions that were often based on the craziest notions.

There were inevitably mutterings under the breath but only the strongest could mount much of a protest.

Education of young greenkeepers has undoubtedly led the surge for knowledge that is impossible to oppose.

At the same time, it has prompted better communications, resulting in Secretaries, committees and members learning as well.

Mutual trust is key.

GTC seminars and roadshows have proved immensely popular in bringing together Green Committee Chairmen, Secretary/Managers and Head Greenkeepers, the prime figures in ensuring the best possible results without interference from golfers themselves.

Nevertheless, the ideal situation would be one, fast approaching, where all golfers are educated enough to appreciate the role of the head greenkeeper.

If a Club has a Green Chairman who is really effective, and works well with the head greenkeeper, he should be kept in his post for as long as he is willing.

The same arrangement should also exist at public and daily-fee courses.

It might even be more important at such courses.

A green fee paying golfer is just as interested in the condition of courses as a private member paying a hefty subscription.

“It always amuses me that golfers rarely offer hints to the chef at their Clubs on how to concoct their culinary delights, but they feel an entitlement to dabble in technical matters as to how greens are cut or bunkers raked”

He plays wherever he likes.

In that case, the owners of courses need to work closely with their greenkeepers if they want to attract and retain business.

If golfers enjoy what they find, they will return; and enjoyment is usually governed by condition.

It is in the greenkeeper's best interests to encourage such a relationship and for the Green Chairman to be knowledgeable enough to understand what may be explained to him.

It always amuses me that golfers rarely offer hints to the chef at their Clubs on how to concoct their culinary delights but they feel an entitlement to dabble in technical matters as to how greens are cut or bunkers raked.

As more and more greenkeepers attain technical excellence, it makes no sense that their every move has to be scrutinised.

They are appointed on account of their experience and technical qualifications and it is their course.

They are perfectly prepared to be judged on results over a reasonable period but, like the members in their own work place, they should be allowed to get on and do their job without somebody constantly looking over their shoulder.



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