



Greenkeepers Training Committee



Donald Steel, GTC Chairman, takes over the GTC seat at GI for this month...

In all walks of life, we should all try to have a better understanding of other people's predicament...

"We specialise in miracles. The impossible takes a little longer". That has always seemed an appropriate motto for greenkeepers, an impression more than confirmed by the meteorological events of 2012.

One of the instinctive skills that cannot be taught is the ability to identify weather patterns, and to adjust to them, but the warmest March, the wettest April, the coldest May and the windiest June have posed unprecedented problems.

Some golfers, who should have known better, took advantage of the situation to be critical of course presentation- one publicly. If only they had stopped to think about these problems, they might have made allowances. Jim Arthur always used to maintain that, in greenkeeping terms, April and May are winter months and that those preparing courses for important events before the arrival of summer are on a hiding to nothing. However, such are the standards that greenkeepers have set, and golfers have come to expect, that any criticism can be seen as a back-handed compliment.

Courses can rarely be prepared to order although deterioration and improvement can be rapid. For last year's Open championship at Royal St George's, they were praying for rain (which came in abundance). This year, Lancashire has prayed for it to stop but, in any event, Royal Lytham's rough, bunkers and the likelihood of wind have invariably proved capable of exacting adequate revenge on those straying from the straight and narrow.

Royal St George's and Royal Lytham have seen significant layout over the years but British and Irish courses are better able



Royal Lytham & St Annes GC

than most to remain playable no matter what the heavens send- or don't send. This is attributable to several factors not least the fact that traditional design offers a variety of shot-making that rewards ingenuity and invention. The wedge has long since become a standard, as opposed to a secret weapon, but great courses offer options. When shots are all-carry and the greens are firm, it is no wonder golfers cry foul.

On other types of course, there is less, if any, choice but the price for higher cost courses lies in the need for large numbers of staff and a huge resources budget. When times are hard, thriftiness is a virtue, a policy on which natural greenkeeping is based. A young Head Greenkeeper whom I met recently was a creditable product of the GTC, a good man joining the band with a career in mind as well as the prospect of authority at an early age. Seen as a legacy, staffs generally, are trained these days to develop multi-skills, the finest grounding employers can give them.

Costs of equipping a course with modern equipment is a sizeable investment but, as the game expands in parts of the world where organisation is not so far advanced, the knack of passing on knowledge is a growing responsibility. It is certainly something the GTC recognises and is working to promote in countries which, without

proper guidance, are in danger of adopting the wrong principles and framework.

Irrespective of climate and the different grasses to be found, there are several common denominators. Throughout the world, fighting thatch by regular aeration to establish vigorous root growth and to assist drainage is key among them. The feed and water brigade also need to be reminded of the folly of their ways although the volume of irrigation to be applied is governed by local factors.

The GTC's widening involvement is an obvious step as no other body has their qualification to assist. Their remit is through the channels of the European Greenkeepers Education Unit as there is still a preference for the production of a British-type vocational training system for the staff of European golf courses to complement the education of talented Course Managers.

Advice on course presentation is all part of any curriculum but greenkeepers can only maintain what architects design and, while some leading professionals may be able to cope with some modern challenges, the rank and file always need "somewhere to go". As Bobby Jones said long ago, "from the standpoint of the inexpert player, there is nothing so disheartening as the appearance of a carry that is beyond their best effort and that offers no alternative route".



The GTC is funded by:



Contact Details

David Golding
GTC Education Director

01347 838640
david@the-gtc.co.uk

GTC
Aldwark Manor
Near York
YO61 1UF

www.the-gtc.co.uk



You can follow the GTC on
Twitter @TheOfficialGTC