



Playing Consistent, Staying Consistent

Greens smoothness is everything when it comes to giving golfers a better playing experience, according to STRI agronomist, Henry Bechelet when speaking at the 'Playing Consistent - Staying Consistent' spring seminar series, organised by Everris, Ransomes Jacobsen and Syngenta.

He highlighted results of the Syngenta Golf Player Survey that had identified smoothness as the top demand for player satisfaction, with out-and-out speed the least important factor in performance of greens.

The seminars, supported by BIGGA, attracted CPD credits for members who attended the events, which took place at Marriott Dalmahoy Country Club, The Mere Golf Resort and Robin Hood, John O'Gaunt and King's Hill Golf Clubs.

"BIGGA's CPD programme is a valuable, structured process that can maintain and enhance the competence and professionalism of greenkeepers and that's why we - Syngenta, Everris and ourselves - linked this series of seminars to the CPD programme," said Gina Putnam, Marketing Manager at Ransomes Jacobsen.

Speaking at the John O'Gaunt

Golf Club event, Bechelet said that he believes getting it right on the greens can elevate a golf course from simply being good, to being something really special.

"If the focus is on smoothness, it means that we don't have to destroy our greens for the sake of pace. We can work on good agronomy and management that is geared around turf health, and producing surfaces that perform every day, all year round."

The seminars' innovative format consisted of morning presentations and afternoon practical workshops, during which the significant impact of mower set up and adjustment in delivering consistent smoothness of greens was demonstrated as was the importance of balanced turf nutrition, while the problem of dry patch was also addressed.

Using the Jacobsen eclipse delegates were shown that too low a clip rate could lead to a rifling effect that slows ball roll. As the clip rate increases smoothness generally improves, but if it gets too much then the smoothness can begin to decline.

The Ransomes Jacobsen team were able to practically demonstrate and compare the difference in smoothness produced on a single green cut at three different

clip rates by an Eclipse 122 pedestrian all-electric mower.

A green was divided into three sections, each mowed at a different clip rate (3.33mm, 2.71mm and 1.61mm) with each adjustment taking less than a minute.

Physical measurement of the resulting green's smoothness was made using the STRI's Trueness Meter™, which measures and records lateral and vertical deviation.

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tion in the turf's surface by means of a golf ball-sized roller moving across the surface.

The results showed that the 2.71 mm clip rate setting brought the greatest improvement (20 per cent) in smoothness, a result that will translate in practice into putts which bobble and deviate less from the golfer's selected direction.

Dr Simon Watson of Syngenta commented that the company's Golf Player Survey could be instru-

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mental in helping greenkeeping teams secure investment in the course.

“The findings of the independent survey are now freely available on the GreenCast website, in a format that greenkeepers can use with club secretaries and Green Committees to argue their case,” he said. “It can help focus efforts on key areas that really influence golfers’ choice in where they play, and the satisfaction that will keep them coming back.”

He highlighted that the new Syngenta wetting and water conservation agent, Qualibra, will have an important role in maintaining consistent playing surface quality this season.

“As an effective water conservation agent, it holds soil moisture deep and evenly and that enables healthy roots to grow more vigorously and it achieves more efficient irrigation use.”

Watson reported trial results have shown that Qualibra is more effective in getting soils back to optimum soil moisture and with significantly less irrigation than other wetting agents tested. A major additional benefit is that it avoids holding too much water that could adversely affect turf health or playability.

Lewis Blois of Everris reinforced the message that relieving stress on turf plants is key to Integrated Turf Management plans that will help maintain more consistent playing surfaces.

He urged greenkeepers to have soils regularly sampled for their nutrient status and to tailor fertilizer applications accordingly. “The aim is to provide a consistent and even supply of nutrients that matches plant growth and demand. Improving efficiency, with more of the nutrients taken up and utilised by the plants, minimises leaching, run-off, lock-up and waste.”

“Avoiding peaks and troughs in nutrient availability with a balanced slow release of nutrients also encourages healthier turf plants, which are more able to withstand stress, wear or disease and will maintain better playing surfaces, he added.

Blois reported results of Everris trials where a SierraformGT slow release fertilizer programme resulted in a 27% reduction in disease infection, compared to just 8% reduction with a conventional fertilizer programme. Furthermore, when a wetting agent was also added to further reduce stress on the plants, the disease reduction was over 46% better than untreated.

A Worthwhile Experience for a BIGGA Member



“My entire team and I attended the seminar and found the content informative and thought provoking. Each presentation stimulated a lot of discussion amongst the attendees which was great because it gave us the views not only of the presenters but of other course managers/greenkeepers.

“It was great for my team to meet the people behind some of the companies we deal with, to interact and learn from people with industry experience. The trainees especially enjoyed the day as they were not aware of what was involved in bringing out new products and innovative solutions to the industry.”

Andy Wood, Robin Hood GC