

Karl's brush with fame

Jim Cook talks to the Course Manager who has designed a **new brush system** from scratch with his own bare hands

It's no surprise that Karl Parry admits to relying on the odd energy drink to help him through the day.

Not only does he manage Denbigh Golf Club, he's spent countless hours developing, launching and marketing a new brush system which is designed to improve playing surfaces.

He's also a nine handicapper, has established a separate lawncare business and is the proud dad of a two-year-old girl – so how does this enterprising 27-year-old fit everything in?

He says: "I start at 5am so I can fit in appointments for Turf Brush Systems later in the day, then go home to my daughter and girlfriend who's so supportive.

"It might sound a bit cheesy but I just love my job, I've got a real passion and drive for it and enjoy it so much.

"Denbigh is a great golf course and we've got a fantastic team here.

"Then, when I go out to do demonstrations later in the day or fit a new machine, I get to meet new people and greenkeepers from across the country.

"It's fascinating to chat to them, find out why they're doing what they're doing and look at their courses.

"You can pick up so many tips or ideas from other greenkeepers."

Karl had the idea for the brushes while working in 2008 at the PGA Greg Norman Shootout, at Tiburon Golf Club, Florida.

He said: "We had very grainy grass fairways there.

"We mowed the fairways every two days and every other week we would send out extra machines using verticutters and extra labour in an attempt to control the severe grain issues.



"This obviously was very expensive to do and labour intensive, so I thought there must surely be a better more productive method of controlling grain.

"We did have groomers but they didn't really have much effect and due to the aggressive nature of grass constant breakdowns occurred.

"So I came up with a heavy duty stiff brush attachment to fit individually to each cutting unit.

"I spent my spare time working on a prototype for one unit and once completed I went out and tested it to great effect. I soon left to come home and was very keen to pursue my idea."

Karl was working as a greenkeeper at Mold Golf Club at the time

For more information about the Turf Brush System visit the Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/brushsystem



"I stayed up all hours into the early mornings, fitting, gluing and drilling"

and lacking finances or industry contacts, so decided to make the brushes himself.

"I started making my own brush systems from blocks of wood cut by hand and drilled thousands of holes for the bristles to fit into.

"To get the bristles I bought push brooms from B&Q, pulled them out and counted out hundreds of thousands of bristles and divided them equally into all the holes.

"At this point my girlfriend was heavily pregnant at eight months and we had a fair few orders to get through.

I drafted in her friends when they came around by getting them to count bristles while I stayed up all hours into the early mornings, fitting, gluing and drilling. It was a great time looking back now but very hard back then."

After Karl was appointed course manager of Denbigh Golf Club he had the opportunity to develop the idea further and has now found a business partner.

Karl added: "To take my business to the next level I needed some investment and the facility to make prototypes on various types of equipment.

"This is where my new business partner and friend John Osman came to the rescue.

"I now have the facility to test on any machine mower on the planet, facilities to make custom design on site in minutes and a great base to operate from."

Whilst the idea of brushes in front of blades is not new, there are a number of original features on the system.

The brushes are independent units that can be fitted to work in front of the mowing blades of most cylinder cutting machines including greens, fairway and semi.

The Greens TurfBrushSystem has two separate sections which have been designed to overlap each other so that the width is identical to that of the machine and so that there is no gap in the brushed area of grass.

They move to the contours of a green, which has been reported to give an improved cut.

Two wide-tread castor wheels on each section are designed to give control, with little ground pressure, and each section is adjustable depending on the aggressiveness of brushing required.

The castors have seals on each bearing and in the centre which should improve their lifespan, especially if they are used immediately after topdressing.

The brushes can be removed or

fitted in a few minutes and each brush is reversible, again, to lengthen their life.

The aim of the brushes is to improve the overall quality, performance and health or condition of the turf's surface.

The theory behind the brushes is that they glide along the surface in front of the blades, removing dew and debris and helping to stand up grass.

This in turn leads to a cleaner cut and also smoother ball roll. They may also be used to brush material after topdressing.

Karl also said they help reduce thatch build up over time.

Alister Beggs, STRI's Northern Area Manager and Official Consultant to the R&A Committee, said:

"They will help with meadowgrass management because at the time of the year when it is producing seed head in the spring, these units seem to help lift seed head off.

So if you're trying to control the spread of meadowgrass then taking seed head off is an important part of it.

"Because you are effectively taking more grass off with any one cut, then essentially over time you are going to help reduce organic matter and thatch build up at the base of the turf.

Whilst you're not probably going to use a brush to deal with thatch directly, the use over time, as with groomers, helps to keep the turf surface healthy and keep organic matter and thatch development under control."

"The only potential negative would be stress on the turf.

"I understand you can set these brushes in terms of the aggressiveness of them.

"The only danger as with any turf refinement tool is that if you use them too much and set them too aggressively you can add to turf stress and turf decline.

"If you use common sense and set them properly and use them at the right frequency then they shouldn't be detrimental to turf.

"It's another tool for greenkeepers to get the objective they're looking for.

"And of course every course is different with different grass mixes, so the way you would use them and set them would be different.

"There are other brush systems out there but I was impressed with what I saw."

Used in the correct way and at the right time, the brushes will prove a valuable asset to any club.



MAIN TOP: Turf brush system in action
ABOVE LEFT: The brushes can be fitted onto most machines
RIGHT: The system can be hooked with chains when not needed