

# TURF MANAGERS' CONFERENCE

Jim Cook reports on a thriving series of seminars, once again held at Harrogate's Crown Hotel



**A packed out hall at the Crown Hotel was the venue for BTME 2014's Turf Managers' Conference – another hugely successful event which is clearly gathering pace each January.**

From a modest start four years ago, over 120 delegates attended this time around.

It's become well-known for discussing topical issues, offering vital knowledge and creating lively, interesting debate amongst delegates. This year's event certainly did not disappoint.

Livening up a room full of people at 9am on a Monday morning is a rare skill and opening speaker, Karl Morris from the Mind Factor, gave an impressive demonstration of how this should be done. His presentation on motivational techniques created a truly buzzing atmosphere and was the ideal tonic to begin the day.

"Anybody who says success is all about technical knowledge is wrong. Anybody who says it is all in the mind is also wrong. Blending these two together is the key to success," he began.

As a particularly striking demonstration of the power of the mind he spoke about belief and how the human brain tends to create invisible barriers and stumbling blocks for itself. For example, before the 1950s the four-minute mile was considered impossible. Incredible as it sounds now, there was the belief that the human body would explode if pushed to break this time. After Roger Bannister achieved the feat in 1954 other athletes around the world then started to break the four-minute mark - the mental barrier had been shattered.

Karl went on to speak about attention and the red dot Louis Oosthuizen painted on his golf glove during The Open in 2010 to act as a trigger to focus solely on the shot in hand. He also spoke about the power of language, the importance of positive thinking, role projection and other topics, all of which relate to the role of the manager and kept everyone thoroughly engaged.

Arnold Phipps-Jones, Course Manager at Three Rivers Golf and Country Club, said: "The opening session was brilliant and a great start to the day. It got you thinking and was fresh, as you get into a certain mind pattern of doing things. It was very interesting and stimulated the brain."

In the next session Junier Browne, from the Environment Agency, spoke informatively about water resource availability and where the greatest pressures were throughout the country. He said water availability would change in the future and the agency needed to look at how it licensed going forward.

Junier also went through the application process for abstraction licences. The Q&A session raised a number of topics for discussion including the issue of containing flood water for later use.

Tammy Ball, from Coaching by the Balls, gave a resonating talk on change and used her personal analogy of when she moved from the US to the UK as an example of how change can be extremely difficult, but can be overcome in stages.

She said any change could potentially be overcome if the person making the change communicates the vision effectively. She said: "Having communication and open dialogue is the most critical thing we do in any business."

She also made the interesting point that simply training someone to do something is not guaranteeing behaviour change. She used as an example that showing someone how to use a new piece of equipment is just the start of the change and that does not signal the end of the training process.

Mark Hunt, from Headland Amenity and author of a very popular weekly weather blog, gave a fascinating insight into why extreme weather has now become the norm and explained the 'peak and trough' weather system.

Continuing with a scientific presentation, Mark demonstrated how the Growing Degree-Day (GDD) model is a calculation to quantify growth from minimum and maxi-



mum temperatures. He went on to explain what can be learned from these figures and how they could help with disease management.

He also posited our attitudes towards aeration should be reviewed as weather patterns have changed. Mark said: "The calendar is irrelevant now. January can be a great opportunity for aeration and we should be flexible and adaptable."

Professor Karl Danneberger, from Ohio State University, was next, drawing on the history of the GDD model to demonstrate how it has been used in other industries and explained how maths in the model can be used to predict such things as danger periods for turf disease.

Barry Neville, Course Manager at Stanmore Golf Club, said: "It was an interesting day and has posed a number of questions which I can look into further."

Yannick Asaf, greenkeeper from Golfpark Neuolen AG in Switzerland said: "It was fantastic, well worth the journey from Switzerland, and I recommend it to any turf manager."