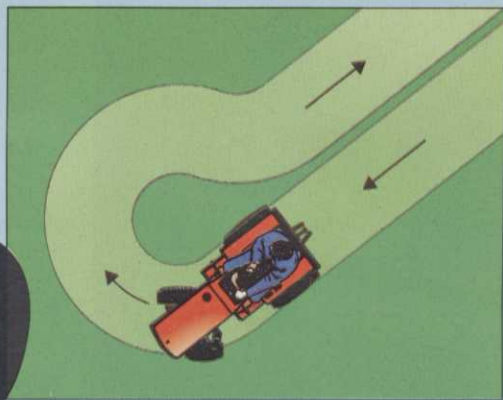


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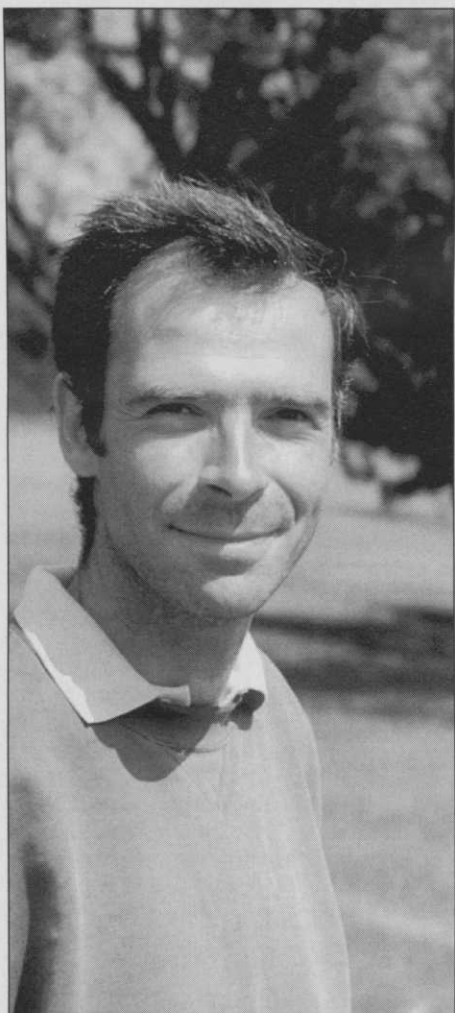
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In the bleak



Richard Barker: Gets nine months out of his course

Few golfers enjoy temporary greens but in this country they are a necessary evil. Scott MacCallum talks with Richard Barker about the subject.

Some things in life are all about selling. Convincing people that their pint pot is half full and not half empty; they're so many years young rather than old and reminding them of the two 40 footers they holed when they want to dwell on the three footer they missed on the 18th green. It all adds up to making them feel brighter, more positive.

It is this technique which should be employed when the hoary subject of winter greens rears its head at the club. No-one likes playing on them but in the eyes of the greenkeeper they are a necessary evil and it's a case of selling members the idea that the alternative to winter greens is not the retention of the regular playing surfaces but a closed course – so they are a good thing after all!

Well that's the defence Richard Barker of Kirby Muxloe GC tries to employ when the groans go up.

Like every greenkeeper in the land Richard

knows he will get an ear bashing when winter greens are discussed and like every greenkeeper in the land he tries to soften the blow when they inevitably come into operation.

"I'm aiming to get an all year round surface with annual vertidrainage, slitting, hollow tining but in reality we get nine months play out of the course and for the other three months we've got to be looking at the possible use of temporary greens," he explained.

It is a problem which is relatively new as it's only recently that we've wanted to play golf all the year round. Previously it was only fanatics who didn't put their clubs into hibernation from November until March.

"The club has nothing written down but my policy is to keep the greens in play as long as possible and move on to temporary greens when they are not fit to be played then ultimately, when they are not fit to be played, the course has to be closed. Like many greenkeepers I am accused of being over cautious and they are probably right but the alternative is to be cavalier with the greens and that could be catastrophic.

"Given the choice I would like to keep the temporaries cut out all year which is what

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mid-winter

some golf clubs do but the committee here requested that I don't maintain them during the year for the simple reason that they think it reminds people that they are going to have to be used. I think it would be better if I could keep them cut out and top dressed, with a white line round them and deemed GUR to keep divots off them.

"So I'm faced with preparing temporaries around August time. I don't make them too big which is possibly a fault of mine – around 10 metres by 10 metres – but I don't want to spend too much money and time maintaining them. Scarify them with a Sisis auto rotor rake and try to give them a couple of top dressings with a 70/30 sand soil mix and maintain them a couple of times a week. I would expect them to come into service around mid-December and have them usable right through to April.

"I always come off the green when there is a good frost but I know some greenkeepers will play them because they say there will be no damage done. The most dangerous time is when the frost is coming out but even if the frost is still three or four inches deep I would still rather come off.

"Generally at the start of the season we might find ourselves on half a dozen temporaries and 12 greens it depends upon those which remain wet or always hold the frost longer. But through the season as a rule it will be all temporaries or no temporaries," he explained.

One of the problems with temporary greens is that any hazards or playing characteristics of the hole are often lost.

"I always try to position the green in front of a bunker or to one side or towards trees albeit they have no leaves on them so that there is still some definition to the hole.

"I generally move them to one side of the green or slightly short. I also try to put them to the side where the tee is for the next hole just to prevent people walking back over the approach to the green nearest the exit."

Another ploy to make the playing of temps



Put it between two bunkers and a tree to give a little interest

more enjoyable is to put in the oversized hole pots as this means that a few long putts are holed and the players have the odd chip in which always keeps the members happy. When they start missing putts even the best temporaries greens will be lambasted.

"I put the large pots in last year and the move was received very well by the gents but not by the ladies. The problem with the ladies is that they have been told that they can play winter medals they can play on temporary greens so long as it is a measured golf course but they cannot play to an oversized hole. The R&A ruling is that it is up to the individual golf club what they decide to do."

Another alternative is to have a local rule where you have a maximum of two putts on

every hole.

"The reason I don't have temps on the front of the green is that in frosty conditions the ball tends to bounce through onto the green and you're not really achieving anything.

As a low handicap player himself Richard is well aware of another problem which afflicts the better players in the club.

"I think it's about time the individual golf clubs, the R&A or the golf Unions came up with a different handicapping system in the winter. The biggest problem I've encountered in the winter through the use of temporary tees and greens is that it makes the course very short and the lower handicapper can't give shots to the higher handicapper.

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In the bleak mid-winter

Moving tees can help vary length and relieve wear areas



decision is another way in which problems later can be removed.

"Last year I got two or three tee mats and put them side by side and marked in chalk please try these tee mats and let me know which one you prefer because people do not like tee mats. None of them was the answer but those who did express a preference made the decision. I wouldn't recommend that in many aspects of the job but in this instance it worked and they chose the most expensive mat. I took this to the committee and the answer was fine we'll get them.

"If I had an unlimited budget and unlimited

room I would have different tees that would encourage different walk ways and different wear areas. I think that is the whole idea about using temporaries both tees and greens is to rest those areas which get worn during the season. We would build a tee which is 30 yards away we could make a straight hole into a dogleg shorter longer. Winter golf is not all that serious and you can do things with the positioning of tee and green that you wouldn't do in the rest of the year.

"Ideally if you have the room you give the golfer something different with the playing characteristics of a hole they enjoy it more

than just playing a shorter version of the original.

"I either position the tees right at the front or right at the back and make the hole longer and rest the original positions," he explained.

"Like many greenkeepers I struggle to know how best to handle the temporary green situation and I'd be delighted to hear from anyone who has bright ideas about making them less of issue."

■ If you have kept the members on your side though the use of some clever ploy why not write to *Greenkeeper International* and share it with your colleagues.

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A severe Challenge

The final of Hayter Challenge this year will be just that – a Challenge as the intrepid men who have already battled through the sectional and regional qualifiers have then to pit their wits with the might of West Lancashire – a course which can test the best.

You want proof? It has regularly welcomed top professionals particularly for final Qualifying for The Open Championship when it is played at Royal Birkdale but the professional course record is still a well preserved 66. That is high when you see scores at other qualifying, and indeed Open, venues. One point of note. In his first year as a professional Nick Faldo led the qualifiers at West Lincs for the 1976 Open with two rounds of 72 and 69.

You also get an idea of the difficulty when Head Greenkeeper John Muir asks if we really want to play off the back tees for the Hayter Final.

"If we have a breeze it's like other people's winds and many people would struggle to make the carries," he explained.

And you believe him because if you read the

HAYTER

club's excellent brochure you'll find a piece about John Hawkesworth, a former Walker Cup player now competing on the European Tour who returned a 68 in the Youths' Championship of 1982.

"Unfortunately it was not recognised as an amateur record because the R&A ordered the 10th tee to be brought forward – because players could not reach the fairway with their drives into the teeth of a gale!"

It's not just the carries which are long. The whole course takes a bit of beating. Off the back tees it is 6767 yards and there are nine holes over 400 yards, five of them par-4s.

"It really is a traditional links course. The first four holes follow the shore and it is two loops of nine one clockwise and the other anti clockwise so you have to be able to play in all winds," said John, who heads a team of

six at West Lincs.

Another feature which West Lincs has which is a feature common among many of the top links courses is that it runs along a railway line.

The club was established in 1873 and was one of the original 24 clubs to contribute to the cost of the Amateur Championship trophy.

Like many clubs at the moment it is very dry adding to its links feel but unlike many clubs John Muir says he can remember it much drier than it was in the middle of August.

"Earlier in the year the water table was as high as it has been for 60 years and even now it is now as low as it was in '84 or '87," he explained.

So the 63 players representing the seven regions battling it out at West Lincs had better ensure that their games are honed for the occasion. I'd recommend a crash course of hitting 3-irons and keeping them low under the wind.

■ Photograph by Brian Morgan



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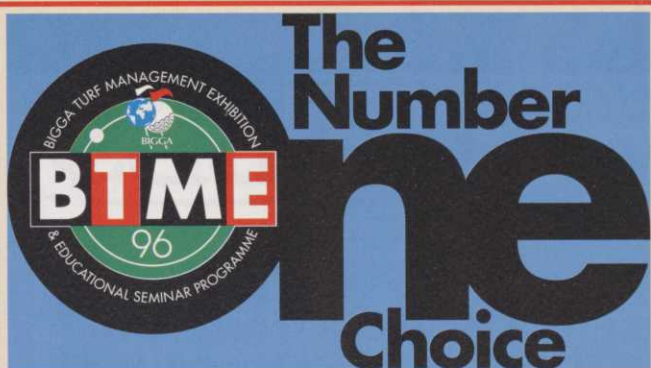
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'F' DAY LOOMS!

"F" Day is fast approaching for the 1996 BTME at Harrogate on January 24-26. The "Fully Booked" sign is being dusted down with a mere 200 square metres still available at time of going to press.

Among the new companies joining 145-plus companies exhibiting next year will be Rhino International Ltd which has taken over 20 square metres in Hall B, and Dennis Ltd.

Louise Lunn, Exhibition and Marketing Executive, said, "The range and diversity of companies which have already booked ensure that visitors to Harrogate next year will have ample opportunity to discuss all their needs under one roof."

The Learning Experience '96 will provide a varied, interesting and topical education programme. Workshops have been re-introduced by popular request and two two-day workshops will run alongside the National Education Conference on Monday 22 and Tuesday 23 January.

Workshop 1 will cover the design and construction of a new golf course while Workshop 2 will introduce the techniques of stress management.

New at Harrogate for '96 will be the introduction of the STRI Chairman of Green/Secretaries Course. This joint STRI/BIGGA initiative will allow Chairmen of Green and Secretaries not only to be introduced to the technicalities of turf management and visit the technical laboratories of the STRI at Bingley but also to sample the unique Harrogate atmosphere and perhaps visit BTME 96.

The BTME 96 Seminar programme is nearing completion and includes speakers from the USA, Canada, Switzerland as well as the UK. Speakers include Course Managers, representatives of Golf Associations, Chairman of Green and representatives from associated industries.

Attending Harrogate in January '96 will be a true learning experience.

SEPTEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Which new company has recently booked over 20 square metres at the show?
2. With which Institute is BIGGA holding a Chairman of the Green/Secretaries course?

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Third prize: One night's accommodation in a top Harrogate hotel and entry to all education seminar sessions.



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