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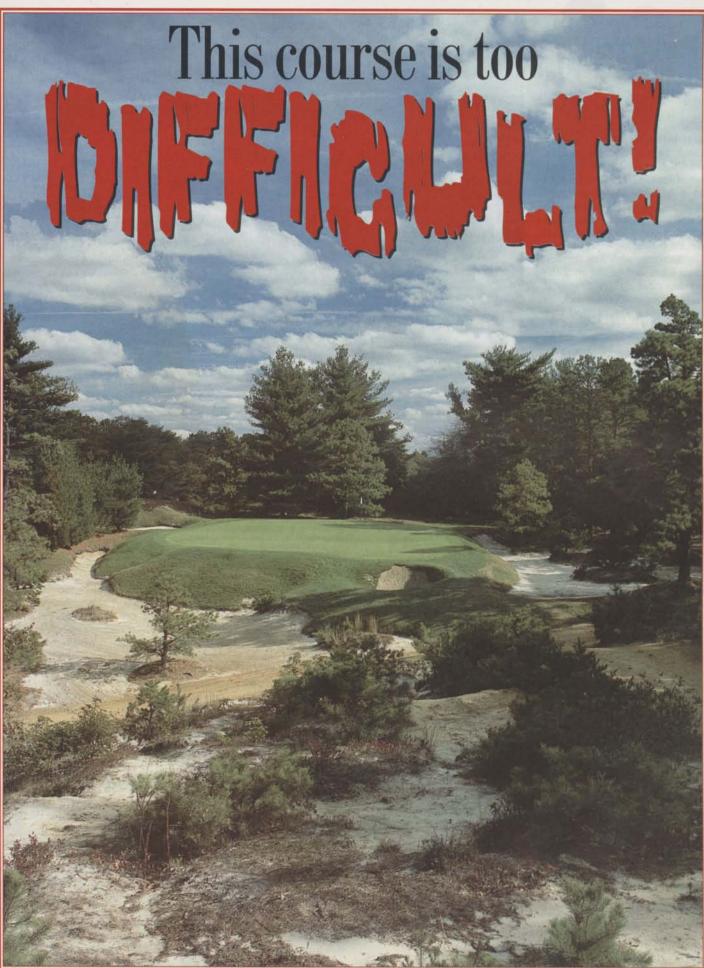


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Dutch golf course architect and R&A member, Joan Dudok Van Heel, reveals some of his pet hates in course design. The frustrated cry, "This course is too difficult" after hours of thwarted effort can be heard so often by keen and dedicated golfers of the last 20 years when

playing on some of the older, great courses of the world.

A course being too difficult, objectively, is really quite rare. There are always large areas on a fairway where a shot can land with impunity. This may mean the sacrifice of a stroke but if one is prepared not to listen to that seductive voice of your alter ego

Pine Valley GC photographed by BRIAN MORGAN

This course is too

to go for broke, then this sacrifice should be seen as a quite normal reduction of your available number of strokes which is calculated on a handicap based on one's prowess. There is no law that says that 18 pars are compulsory for every golfer. You would, when playing tennis, not expect to play like Sampras, who hits the ball more often and harder over the net than most, and yet play tennis on the same sized court with the same height of the net and both enjoy playing the game.

In most games and sports, not only power counts, but even more cunning, strategy, patience, playing within your limits which you know best yourself.

Establish your own pars, bogeys and double bogeys before you go out with honest modesty, stick to those and you will find not only few courses are difficult but also that you are winning most of your games.

Too difficult according to my experience means unfair and for a golf architect to be accused of unfair design really hurts and should send him running back to the drawing board. Unfair design implies, presenting the golfer with difficulties that are illogical, not to be circumvented, the punishment for a not quite perfect shot not fitting the crime, and not providing the opportunity for the basic chess-like manoeuvring which is such a decisive factor in golf.

This unfairness sometimes gets gimmicky; unfortunately one finds at times that a golf course designer has not sufficient knowledge and experience of the game itself and the wish to be different (and therefore hopefully known) runs away from the subtle dictates of the game and the environment.

I'm afraid having to confess an innate dislike for, and consider unfair, the gimmicky appearance of revetted bunkers with vertical walls. On seaside courses, with prevailing western winds, with bunkers facing East, revetting and fairly steep walls to keep the sand in place can be justified, hut does one need vertical walls, to achieve this aim, which will never give such bunkers the appearance of having been created by wind erosion and look utterly unnatural, like a wound in nature, are expensive to build and will often give the unfortunate golfer who may have just failed to clear such a bunker another "punishment not fitting the crime" with unfair, if not unplayable lies.

I have played at Muirfield since 1946 but yet had to play so often sideways or backwards out of bunkers than during my last visit. My three partners and myself played three rounds which meant between us 216 holes and at least 40 times or 20% during which a recovery from a bunker in the direction of the hole was impossible.

I know that on the short 13th this has always been the case and is one of the features of the course but to have vertically or revetted bunker walls on practically every second hole of this beautiful course seems out of order. Never could it have been the intention of the Good Saint Andrews to punish unfairly in situations which are out of context with the surroundings. If there is a general feeling that the top golfer should be punished for inaccuracy, do so by other fair and not foul means.

To put too punishing bunkers for slightly wayward shots lacks imagination. There are more subtle and architecturally better and more natural ways to make a course difficult and strategically more demanding.

A bunker should look natural, indeed as if shaped by wind and erosion (even if there is no particular exposure to winds!)

The revetted bunker with near vertical walls has certainly no place on non-seaside courses (sometimes on flat "powder" courses like in the Netherlands a more elaborate bunker construction on the "lee" side has a point) as they are costly to build and too blatantly man-made.

In such situations the epitaph "unfair" is indeed justified.

Pine Valley, considered to be the most difficult course in the world, can also be "mastered" by using one's head and relying on strategy. If anywhere, here one has to swallow one's pride and be prepared to give a few strokes to Par. I ought to know as it took me at least 10 rounds of humiliation (including taking nine strokes to get out of a particular pot-bunker on the 10th, the Devil's Arse hole) to allow modesty to prevail and accept scores varying from 78 to 87! Strategy is the key to a good score: Accepting to play for a probable Bogey with a putting change for a par, instead of an unlikely, albeit heroic par effort which may end in disaster.

A good golf course should never be penal, but reward good course management with the occasional situation where courage and heroic inspiration gets an extra reward.

Neither is exaggerated length necessary nor to be recommended: A short Par 4 cleverly defended, punishes impetuosity more than a long long Par 5, and will give the not so good but cunning player a chance to get his Par. After all, there are no hard and fast rules in measurement at a golf course. Unlike football fields, cricket pitches or tennis courts, a golf course is dictated by Nature and the creative feeling of the architect to follow the contours and idiosyncrasies of the site. That makes golf a special sport, not only the game itself but the enormous variety of one's environment.

This also applies to the often heard criticism that one should not have two consecutive Par 5's or Par 3's? Although, three Par 4's in a row are considered acceptable! If nature gives a marvellous opportunity to make a really good hole one should take it regardless of the length. Equally one should not forego this opportunity in order to increase the SSS and thereby sacrifice a good hole. A golf course should demand to be played with sound and strategical thinking, which will be rewarded if the architect has done his homework.

Sometimes one hears the complaint that a Par 4 is too long to get on in two shots for the average player. Where is it written than getting on the green in the, for "the par player", required number of strokes should apply to the average player? The fact that John Daly can hit a green of a 632 yard hole in two shots does not make that hole a Par 4!

Once I happened to overhear a conversation in the locker room after the opening of a course designed by myself. Apparently the course was found difficult, but one reasonably senior golfer did not quite agree, "provided you use your head". This remark made my day!



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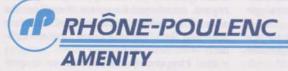
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Rhône-Poulenc Amenity, Fyfield Road, Ongar, Essex CMS 0HW. Telephone 01277 301115 Fax 01277 301119. SUPER MOSSTOX CONTAINS DICHLOROPHEN. MOSSTOX IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF RHÔNE-POULENC AGRICULTURE LTD. ALWAYS READ THE LABEL : USE PESTICIDES SAFELY. (MAFF 05339) © RHÔNE-POULENC AGRICULTURE LTD 1997. Watermation has undergone some major changes in the past 18 months as Scott MacCallum found out when he visited one of the latest companies to join BIGGA's Golden Key programme.

Watermation has been a name synonymous with golf irrigation since installing its first fully automatic system at Sundridge Park in Kent over 27 years ago. It is the company's proud boast that almost every Open Championship venue which possesses automatic irrigation has a Watermation system.

It is a record of which any company would be proud but, under new ownership and management introduced at the beginning of 1996, the company is now looking ahead to greater success rather than harbouring any thoughts of resting on its laurels.

"Over the years Bill Hawthorn and Robin Sitwell built up a superb brand name," explained Managing Director Ray Lewis, of the two original founders of the company. "Go to almost any golf course in the country and you'll get some sort of indication of Watermation's influence. We've got a very good and a very loyal client base," explained Ray, who showed his own prowess on the golf course by captaining Watermation's team to victory on BIGGA's 10th anniversary golf day.

Ray bought into Watermation when both Bill and Robin expressed a desire to wind down from the rigours of running the company and, as well as a shrewd business brain, Ray has brought a brand of enthusiasm and drive to the company which has seen major changes in the last 18 months.

"The first thing the managers and I did was have a brain storming session which lasted 12 hours during which ideas, potential improvements and criticisms were aired. These were all fed into a computer by everyone independently so no-one knew where they had come from. Everyone knew what the problems were but no-one wanted to admit to them. That's not uncommon.

"By the end we were all absolutely exhausted but I had a hit list of what needed to be done," said Ray.

The principle objective highlighted was a need to regain Watermation's original market.

One of the first tasks was to put in place a sales team and a Production Manager, both of which were new to the company.

"We had been a reactive rather than a proactive company. Sales were generated by phone calls which came in. That was it

in terms of getting business. I saw it as extremely positive that the company achieved the level of business which it did without a sales force or a production manager," said Ray.

Next we needed to look at the sourcing of components for the Watermation product range.

"I thought it would be better if we bought our parts from a number of suppliers and not just one."

Since those initial changes were put in place the company has benefited immensely.

"We have made tremendous progress. We have grown by around 35% on a year on year basis and our staffing level has risen from 45 to 65," explained Ray.

Included in that number are four installation teams who, together with two long estab-

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Watermation A company

lished and highly regarded sub-contractors, ensure that the company's commitment to quality is consistent.

"We've gone out to recruit people who have a greenkeeping background and who know what they are doing on a golf course. We spent a lot of time last year finding

these people and training them," Ray explained.

> "Most of the work we do is upgrades although we also do completely new systems. We sell anything from something worth a couple of pounds to others

worth as much as half a million." Another area which is receiving the

Ray Lewis attention is the service division.

"We have half a dozen qualified engineers who are on the road continually and we are going to spend more time on our maintenance activity. That will be one of our key strategic moves for the next 12 months."

DIDEN KEY

While ensuring that the home market is not neglected Watermation is researching possible markets in Europe.

"We've got to find a formula which enables

us to do business in Europe and to do that we must do a thorough research into the opportunities. We want to do that before we commit our investment," explained Ray, as we sat in the Aldershot Headquarters of the company.

Richard Pocock, as European Contract Sales Manager and Training Manager, is the man charged with researching the business opportunities outside the UK.

"In America we are not seen in the same profile as some of the other companies but in Europe we operate on a level playing field," he explained.

"We provide what we feel is needed out in the market place. We listen to what our customers want and design their systems accordingly," explained Richard, an Australian whose irrigation experience has taken him all over the world.

Watermation produced an extensive "Mission Statement" at the beginning of the new regime. An internal document, it outlines the aims of the company and the way it intends achieving them. Training looms large throughout.

The company has embarked on a programme whereby every individual undergoes



REBORN

some form of training whether it be internal based product training, working under the NVQ system for customer service on which around a dozen people are working at the moment or advanced sales management training.

"We identified that there was a bit of a gap in the greenkeeping industry in its knowledge of irrigation," explained Ray.

"Richard is engaged in a training needs analysis, part of which is talking to BIGGA, part of it is talking to colleges and part of it is talking to greenkeepers so that we can get an overall idea of what help we, as a supplier, can give in that respect," said Ray.

"We stood back and took the decision that as a large player in the industry we ought to be part of BIGGA's Golden Key sponsorship programme," explained Ray.

Watermation claims a unique place in the irrigation industry as the only company which manufacturers its own components, designs and installs the system and maintains the whole system. Last year, amid all the other progress, it was decided to move away from being a company which purely sold impact drive sprinklers to become a company which would offer the customer a choice.

"I don't see too many changes in the fundamental mechanical product in the future but where I do see a change is on the electronic side. I am sure there are a lot of things where we can learn from other industries and apply them to this area," said Ray.

Watermation may suffer in comparison with the larger companies when it comes to investment potential but they have hit on a innovative way around that shortcoming.

"We, as a company, are too small to invest a great deal in research and development so with that in mind we have linked up under the Government's Teaching Companies Scheme with the University of Reading. The University provides us with access to all of the facilities and a graduate who can work on research for us.

"It's another example of us thinking 'outside the box' and coming up with a way in which we, as a small company, can compete and develop."

One of the string of new employees to Watermation is Phil Langdon, the Contract Sales Manager.

"A major benefit we offer to the customer a

total service concept. If they ring us we can handle all their needs. I also believe being a British company gives us an advantage.

"We can react quickly and also tailor product to suit the customers' needs throughout the UK," explained Phil.

The Contract Sales Department splits the UK into three with each area having its own salesman and design engineer.

"That way the customer gets to know his engineer and build a long term relationship with him."

The man who heads up the new sales team is Joe Turner, the Distribution Sales Manager.

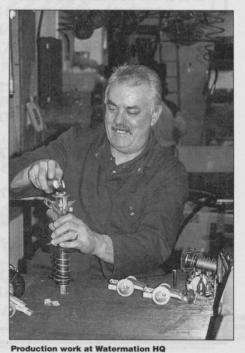
"I have a team of four professional salesmen who have been chosen for their industry expertise. They are the Watermation ambassadors out on the road and responsible for promoting all aspects of Watermation' services.

"The irrigation industry has had a very reactive approach in the past and the only time the customer has seen someone is when the system developed a fault.

"We have developed a more pro-active approach and call on golf clubs as part of our routine. After all the irrigation system is probably the largest single investment the club has to make outside of the clubhouse and the course itself so it makes sense for us to show an interest in them," explained Joe, who added that his team are all linked to the head office by laptop computer and e-mail.

"Every call that we make to a golf club is logged onto our database and with communication being such a vital part of any successful business, everyone in the company has access to the information within hours of a call being made," said Joe.

The pace at which Watermation is putting its new strategies into practice, allied to an attention to detail and refusal to accept second best, is a credit to everyone at the company and should ensure a rosy future for one of the best known names in the industry.



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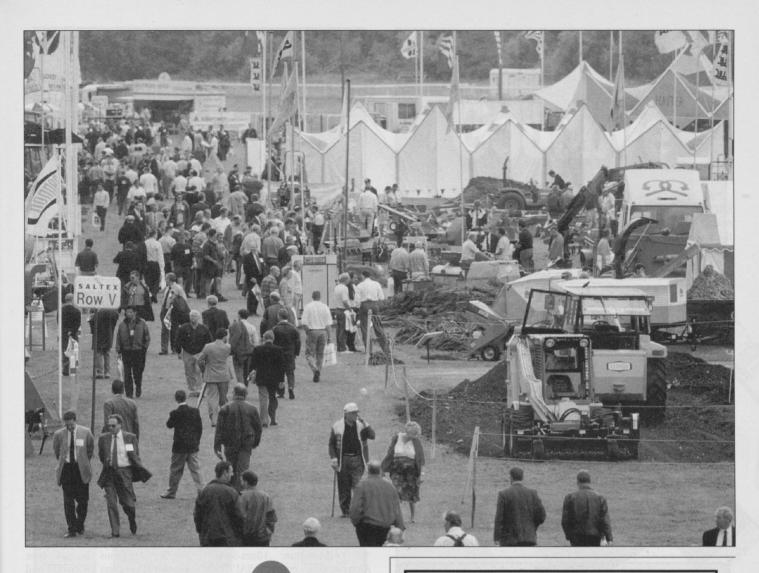
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SALTEX⁹⁷

Sports, Amenities, Landscaping 2-4 September '97 Royal Windsor Racecourse

It's showtime!

• Ver 370 exhibitors have booked their places for SALTEX '97, the largest outdoor trade exhibition for the sports, amenities and landscaping industries, taking place from September 2-4, at the Royal Windsor Racecourse.

With sound ecological practices an increasing priority, SALTEX this year will include a water aeration feature demonstrating new technologies for chemical-free water treatment. Visitors can also learn about industry developments and ways of improving their facilities in the programme of free educational seminars presented by some of the key influencers and suppliers in the industry. Organisations whose representatives visitors can look forward to hearing include The Institute of Wastes Management, SISIS and Jacobsen E-Z-Go Textron.

The SALTEX demonstration area will again give professionals responsible for outdoor spaces the opportunity to check out how products they are interested in actually perform in the field.

To help visitors develop ideas and increase their performance in the face of increasing pressures, SALTEX '97 will feature an expanded free seminar programme sponsored by Jacobsen E-Z-GO Textron. Furthermore, the Training and Development Pavilion will be sponsored by The Toro Company.

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'We want to give visitors the most valuable experience possible'

"We want to give visitors to SALTEX the most valuable experience possible. By working with the industry, we are continuously improving what SALTEX has to offer," commented Jon Gibson, SALTEX Show Director.

The SALTEX Seminar Programme will include presentations from some of the industry's leading trade organisations and suppliers on new developments in the sports, amenities and landscaping markets. The programme is designed to give visitors an insight into industry issues and trends and highlight how to take advantage of new developments to improve performance.

HOW TO GET TO SALTEX

SALTEX is held at Windsor Racecourse. About 20 miles west of Central London, Windsor is easy to reach by rail, road and air. Heathrow is only a fifteen minute drive away; Gatwick and Luton are within an hour's drive. BY ROAD

From the M25. Leave the motorway at Junction 15, where you'll join the M4, heading west.

From the M4: Westbound leave M4 at junction 6. Eastbound - leave M4 at junction 8/9. Then follow brown and white signs for Windsor racecourse.

BY BUS

Windsor Express bus numbers 700, 701, 702 and 703 connect London with Windsor. The 718 Royal River Route service connects London Victoria with Wind-SOL

BY RAIL

From London Paddington: Leave the train at Slough and join the local service to Windsor and Eton Central Station. Approximate journey time is 35 minutes.

From London Waterloo: Leave the train at Windsor and Eton Riverside Station. Approximate



Organic-based high potash foliar and root feed specially formulated to maximise turf quality and afford protection during over-wintering. Also provides early season treatment, encouraging spring growth, stimulating soil bacteria and enhancing colour. 3 x 20 litre containers treat one hectare.



journey time is 45 minutes.

Information about British Rail services is available on 0345 484950. A bus shuttle runs from the stations to the showground. FROM THE AIRPORT TO

SALTEX

From Heathrow: Bus nos. 701 and 726 for Windsor or M4 route, as above.

From Gatwick: M23 Northbound to exit 7. M25 Westbound to exit 15. M4 to exit 6. Then follow 'By Road' directions, above. From Luton: M1 southbound to exit 21, M25 Westbound to exit

15 to M4. Exit 6 for Windsor. Then follow 'By Road' directions, above.

WHERE TO STAY

Ring The Bed Booking Service, run by the Tourist Information Centre in Windsor, where prices start from around £18 for B&B. Telephone 01753 841746 or 01628 796924, quoting "IOG (Mon-Sun 10am-5pm). ·97". Alternatively, contact SALTEX's accommodation agency, Delegate Hospitality, on 01543 418848.

Who to see at the show

List of selected exhibitors

Levington Horticulture -Stand F48-50 - will be launching five new liquid turf fertilisers this year, giving turf managers the option of precisely meeting the nutritional needs of their turf at any given time of year. Not only do the new Greenmaster Liquids provide users with a comprehensive choice in themselves, but they can also be tank mixed to generate even more nutrient ratio options.

With the new Greenmaster Liquid range, greenkeepers and groundsmen will have the opportunity to tailor the right treatment - be it a balanced feed, a high K product, additional trace elements or a tonic feed - quickly and easily.

Greenmaster Autumn contains ferrous sulphate to control moss through the autumn and winter, and has a 6:5:10 NPK formulation to help toughen the sward and improve rooting without encouraging excessive, frost susceptible, top growth.

Levington Turfclear is the second key product for this time of year to be specifically featured at SALTEX. Turfclear contains carbendazim and has the dual properties of controlling casting worm species - always a problem in September - and also preventing certain turf diseases liable to crop up on weakened and stressed turf

Mommersteeg International - Stand 22-24 - Sports and amenity grass seed breeder Mommersteeg International's display features its wide range of top varieties and mixtures for the greenkeeper, groundsman and landscaper looking to produce a quality surface.

The spotlight will be on the company's top-rated varieties -Mocassin an slender creeping red fescue, Amadeus a turf type perennial ryegrass for cricket and Landscaping and new for Spring 1998 - Vienna, a turf type perennial ryegrass for winter sports grounds. These varieties will be featured in the mixtures MM10, MM13, MM21, MM29 and MM 50

Mommersteeg will also highlight its two seed treatments -Improved Headstart and Apron T.

Details of all Mommersteeg sports and amenity grass seed varieties and mixtures are available from Mommersteeg International, The Anderson Centre, Spitfire Close, Ermine Business Huntingdon, Park. Cambridgeshire PE18 6XY. Telephone: 01480 459500.

Bailey's - Stand H24 - will be introducing the 'Olympian Prescription Dressing' at SALTEX 97. Firstly, 'Olympian Triple Action' a nutrient enhanced topdressing, containing an excellent balance of macro nutrients and a rich range of trace elements, making it an effective treatment for suspected mineral deficiencies, a top quality dressing, and a fast acting organic fertiliser! Secondly 'Olympian Thatch Eater' a dressing containing a living microbial component, vital to the breakdown of organic matter, making nutrients available for the devel-

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