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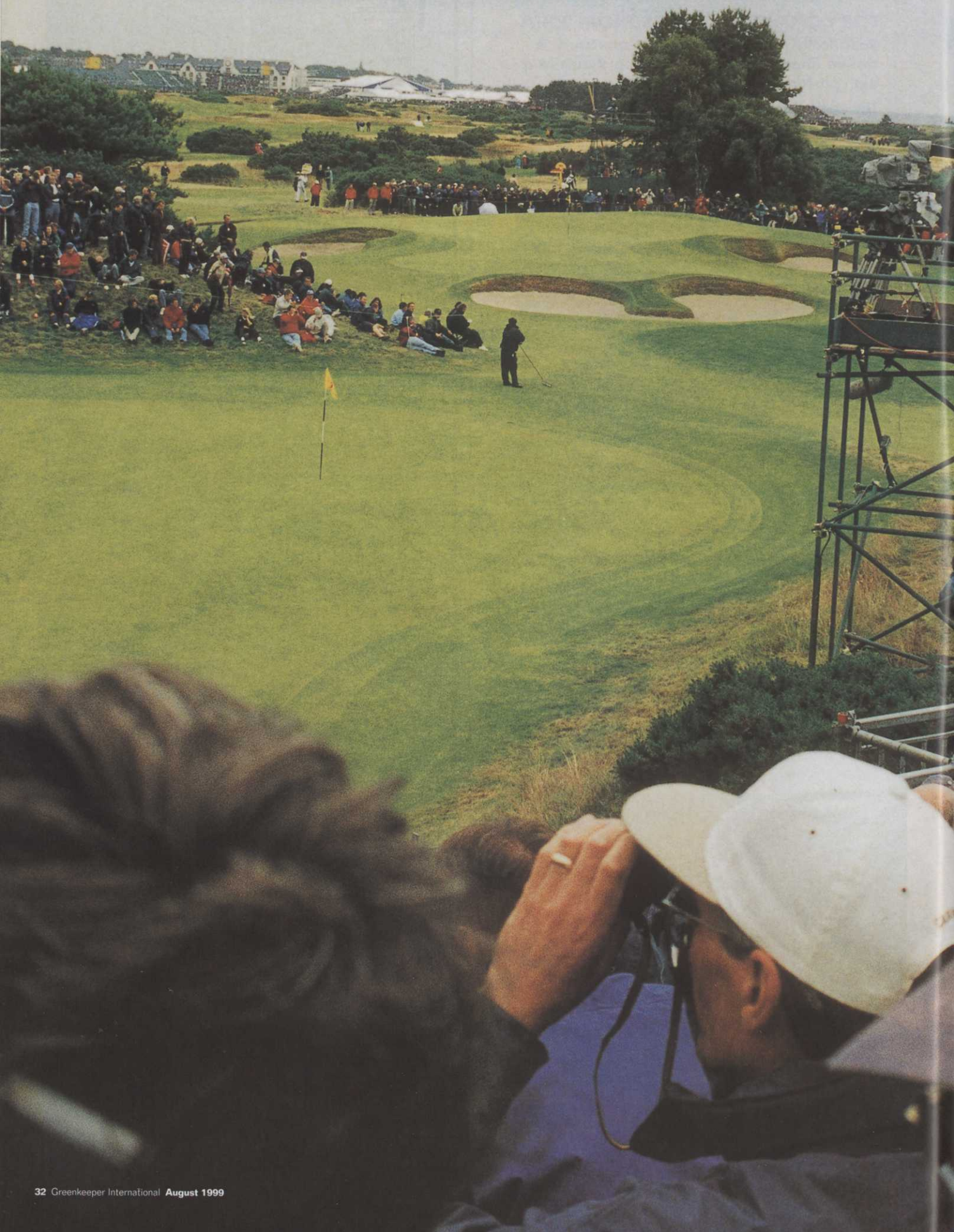
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**Scott MacCallum will never forget The Open Championship's return to Carnoustie. Indeed he very nearly had a nasty bump on the head to take home with him...**

# Open Glory

The 1999 Open was another occasion which gave BIGGA's Greenkeeping Support Team members the opportunity to say "I was there". And by "there" I mean the 18th green because it has been the scene of some amazing scenes over the last few years

Remember Costantino Rocca's exploits at St Andrews in '95 and Justin Rose's holed chip at Birkdale last year. Astonishingly both of those pale into insignificance when measured against Carnoustie's contribution.

The finish to the Championship was something that any script editor would dismiss as far to fanciful to be remotely believable.

First Jean Van de Velde, whose golf through 71 holes - plus the 36 holes of qualifying at Monifieth - made him more than deserving of the title, threw it all away on the final hole by taking

seven when a double bogey six would have seen him the winner.

Then another outsider, this time the man in the field born closest to the Carnoustie links, played the fiendishly difficult final two holes of the play-off birdie birdie to become the first home grown, home based Scot to win an Open since James Braid. Paul Lawrie also became the first qualifier to win since the present qualifying system came into being in 1963 and only did so at Downfield by shooting four under par on the back nine of the final round.

In addition there can rarely have been an Open when the spotlight fell so firmly on the man charged with the responsibility of preparing the links and if John Philp felt some stabbing pains on various parts of his anatomy it must surely have been as a result of superstar golfers sticking pins in curly headed John Philp lookalike dolls.

Not that John took the comments lying down. He was widely quoted in the press - including the back page of The Sun - defending the set-up of the course and by the end of the week he had more or less won the propaganda war with the public attacking pampered whingeing golfers.

Sure the course was tough and perhaps the rain had caused the rough to grow a little more than was ideal but, as John himself said during the week, the players don't question taking a penalty drop if they go into water or having to play three off the tee if they go out-of-bounds but they think they should be able to still make the green after they'd hit into the rough. The rough is meant to be a hazard.

He was also adamant that the course was set up strategically and not penalty and that had the players attacked it more on certain holes they may have found more reward in the shape of wider landing areas.

## He Didn't Want to Do That

Jean Van de Velde's fateful approach to the final green in regulation play was the start of his demise.

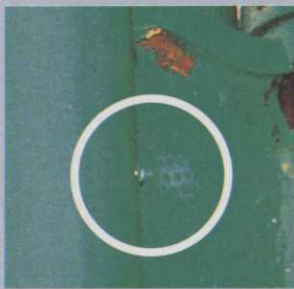
With the gallery by the green waiting to greet the unexpected but well deserving Champion the Frenchman had played his tee shot wide out on the 17th fairway. All he had to do was reach the green in at most four and two putt to be Champion but he decided to go for the green.

His long iron veered right and just missed the heads of your Chairman, his wife and your Editor by no more than two feet. Had the ball, in conventional fashion, merely clattered into the stand he would have faced a relatively easy shot from the dropping zone, the same if it had bounced off the front of the stand and into the trampled rough beside the green. But it hit the one thing capable of propelling the ball into real trouble - a metal plate, no more than three inches square (see pics), attached to the pole which joined the wooden bottom portion of the stand to the upper fenced element. This was at a right angle to the rest of the structure and hitting it flush caused the ball to fly back over the burn and into thick rough.

Even if it had gone back into the burn he would still have had a shot to spare after he'd taken a drop and played to the green but it could not have turned out worse for him.

The rest is history, he plopped the next in the burn then having taken his penalty shot played the next into the bunker and made a brave seven footer to make the play-off but he'd missed his golden opportunity.

However, despite the folly of the shot selection it just shows how unlucky he was. Even if he'd hit Gordon or myself we might have gone to hospital but he would certainly have gone on to be Open Champion.



Above (top): The shot Van de Velde was faced with after his unfortunate rebound

Above and right: The mark of failure. How close Van de Velde came to success and certain heads





At one point early on Friday morning, a member of the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support team raked the 5,000 bunker in the five Opens since records began. In total since St Andrews in 1995 the Support team, in addition to their other duties during the week, have raked 5,792 bunkers.

The press competition was won by Kay Smart, of the Mid Glamorgan Press Agency, whose four round estimate was 1398. The daily prizes were won by Paul Kiddie, of the Edinburgh Evening News; Dermot Gilleece, of the Irish Times; Neil Mulligan, of the Scottish Sports International (Tayside) and Kay Smart.

Kay wins a £700 Hayter Harrier lawn mower courtesy of Hayter Ltd and the prize will be presented to Kay by Kim Macfie later in the year.

The Support Team winner was Anthony Davies, of Prestbury Park, with the daily winners, Steve Oultram; John Selwood; Robert Hogarth and Tom Glover.

**Open Notes**

Justin Rose obviously had energy to spare during his first round. Lining up a putt in his inimitable style he carried on to do a couple of press ups. Information supplied by BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team Member, James Braithwaite, of Long Ashton GC.

The Craig Spence, Raymond Russell, Scott Verplank Friday match had some expert local knowledge within their ranks...if only they knew. Their lady scorer was an eight time Carnoustie Club Champion, a former runner-up in the British Girls and a lady who once beat Laura Davies as a junior. Information supplied by BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team Member Andy Sheehan of Bentley GC.

Greg Turner lightened the mood on the 1st tee on Friday when he went up to the scoreboard carrier assigned to his match pulled out some of his red numbers turned to Jose Maria Olazabal and Phil Mickleson and said "What are these?" Olazabal said that they wouldn't be needing any of them. Information supplied by BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team Member Chris Sheehan, of West Derby GC.

HRH The Duke of York took an interest in the work of the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team when he asked Alex Robertson, of Grangemouth, how much sand he had raked in the Bernhard Langer/Steve Pate match.

Information supplied by BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team Member, Alex Robertson, of Grangemouth GC.

Nick Price offered a beer to the person who could find his ball when he went astray during the third round. It was found by playing partner Santiago Luna and Price was as good as his word getting a beer for the Spaniard. Information supplied by BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team Member, Stig Persson, of Sweden.

During the final round Sven Struver broke his 8-iron in a bunker on the 7th and was told by the rules official that it could be repaired. Struver said that he would need it for the 13th and it was taken off to be repaired. When he got it back he was told the glue would need half an hour to set but as he didn't have the time he went ahead and used it anyway. Information supplied by BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team Member, Chris Sheehan, of West Derby GC.



One of the boys. Paul Lawrie shares his moment of glory with the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team

**Open Championship bunker history**

	St Andrews (95) 112 bunkers	Lytham (96) 185 bunkers	Troon (97) 84 bunkers	Birkdale (98) 117 bunkers	Carnoustie (99) 115 bunkers
Rd 1	214	501	344	355	539
Rd 2	201	577	272	406	468
Rd 3	130	269	107	226	202
Rd 4	156	271	136	153	265
<b>Total</b>	<b>701</b>	<b>1618</b>	<b>859</b>	<b>1140</b>	<b>1474</b>









Right: Paul Lawrie enjoys the moment in the company of Carnoustie's greenkeeping team



**The Youngest Player**

Downfield Course Manager, Paul Murphy, presented qualifier Zane Scotland, of Surrey, with the flag from the 16th hole of the Dundee final qualifying course. Zane, at 16, was the youngest qualifier for years and the flag will be a permanent memento of his achievement. "Everyone at the club was extremely impressed with Zane and delighted with his success and we wanted to mark it with something," explained Paul, who was also thrilled when another Downfield qualifier lifted the Claret Jug at the end of the week.



Above: Three members of the Support team prepare one of the 18th's greenside bunkers for the play-off



Above: Ian Semple, of Old Fold Manor, puts his back into it



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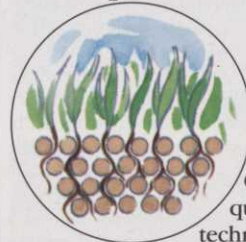
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Ad Ref 5



**Roland Taylor looks at the development of the turf industry and how quality turf virtually can now be bought "off the shelf"**

# What a sod

Turf is at the centre of most readers' every waking hour and for many, one suspects, part of their sleep. After all, it is the core of what greenkeeping is all about - trying to achieve the ultimate playing surface. A lot rides on what one is given to work with. As the saying goes "you cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear." The quality of turf is vital, especially where it is being renewed. This is a time when there is an opportunity to put down exactly what is needed and, like the artist, start with a new canvas. By beginning with quality, the chances of success are greatly increased.

One suspects that, in the early days of greenkeeping, some well-known courses decided to set up their own turf nurseries - they needed to have a ready supply of turf with the cultivars they wanted, grown under their conditions. This would have seemed a logical step three decades ago when a supply of top quality turf was not always readily available and orders for small batches were not entertained. Times have changed and today turf containing the latest pre-blended mixtures can be virtually bought off the shelf, in any quantity. A whole industry has grown up to serve this market and to find out more we visited Europe's biggest turf growers - Rolawn.

Their policy regarding seed mixtures is different because they buy in the best cultivars from individual seed houses. In short, they choose the

best each seed house has and then blend their own mixture. This takes more time and adds cost, however the company believes this provides better turf quality than buying mixtures off the shelf.

The company was originally started on the Aberdeenshire estate of Lord Forbes, primarily to supply turf to golf courses. While the original locality initially served its purpose, a new site was sought. The Vale of York proved to be ideal - flat, light sandy soil with deep bore holes for irrigation. In addition there are good road links - an important factor when time is of the essence in getting freshly lifted turf on site, fast.

Over 2000 acres are under cultivation and this is being increased annually by about ten per cent.

Growing turf commercially is not the same as managing it on a golf course. Whilst related they are separate skills. Between 8 to 12 weeks are required to bring freshly laid turf into play. The company has considered supplying ready-to-play turf, but decided against it feeling that the market is unlikely to pay the extra price and that in any case, bringing turf in to play is a skill best left to the individual greenkeeper in his own course environment.

The sandy soil on which the mixtures are grown is compatible with most other soil types but there are some greenkeepers who would prefer soil-free turf. To accommodate them, the company has recently installed a



new turf washing plant. This latest equipment deals with big rolls, as well as the standard one square metre roll and small quantities can be supplied any time throughout the year. In its washed condition the turf is a mat of living plants with little support, so it is highly perishable and needs laying as fast as possible. It will also require plenty of irrigation once down.





Rolawn is a commercial operation and therefore very conscious of market trends and requirements. The final product has to be what is wanted and for this reason they work very closely with the top seed breeders and the STRI. A field of turf takes between eight and twelve months to be ready for harvesting, so decisions on which cultivars to include in the

mix are important. Get it wrong and very few, if any, want the product. The company blends its selected seeds and the process of producing top quality turf begins. Once sown and established, the young turf is mown regularly throughout the year at a height, which has been found to be an ideal length for producing sufficient roots

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Ad Ref 31



# What a sod

to support a strong healthy sward. The very fine clippings are generally not collected as these return nutrients to the growing plants. There are occasions when it is necessary to collect the cut grass and this is carried out using a vacuum type collector. Weeds and disease are eliminated by spraying as and when required and the establishment of strong healthy grass plants are encouraged by a number of other management techniques.

To ensure that buyers can be confident in what is in the actual turf mixture being grown, the STRI is asked to carry out testing of a large part of the crop. Rolawn then make the STRI's findings available to anyone who asks for a copy of their report.

The day of harvesting finally arrives and, depending on the area to be lifted and weather conditions, work can start as early as 4 o'clock in the morning. Dealing with a perishable product means it needs to be cut and transported to its destination as quickly as possible. It can be a big

operation. On the day we were there, 23 articulated lorries were loaded and sent on their way.

Immediately after the turf has been removed, the plough moves in and the growing process begins again.

There are two other methods of obtaining turf. Setting up your own nursery or by seeding appropriate areas. While both have their merits, time in establishing them and time taken in managing them have to be given careful consideration.

A nursery site will have to be of sufficient size to meet the estimated requirements for a two-year period plus contingencies. Irrigation needs to be readily available. How the soil is prepared is important, as it needs to be well drained and of a depth that allows strong root development. Some bought-in turf can be included, but the main objective is to grow mixtures to match the existing areas on the course. A first class maintenance programme similar to the one used on existing playing areas is necessary to ensure good quality

replacement turf is available at short notice.

The other alternative is seeding worn or damaged areas - and again there are pluses and minuses with time being one of the major considerations. This is illustrated in the difference between an autumn seeded green and a turfed one. The former would not be playable for over 20 months while the latter could be open in about seven. Another factor to take into account is the limited period during which seed can be sown, whilst turf can be laid virtually all-year-round. Seed is initially less costly and the precise mixture of cultivars is available.

However, pre-blended mixtures are generally only available in pre-determined form. With seed there is also the risk of "washout" owing to heavy rains.

Most readers are under considerable pressure to meet the increasing demands of players. Playing surfaces have to be more resilient plus disease and wear resistant and seed breeders



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