



BTME2002 will be upon us all too soon, and here at BIGGA we're aiming to provide the most up-to-date information to both visitors and exhibitors with a brand new BTME microsite ...

btme.org.uk: What a site for an exhibition!

Each January in Harrogate, BIGGA hold their annual Turf Management Exhibition (BTME).

With an extremely diverse range of visitor, ranging from the fine turf professional right through to the golf shop pro, we must always ensure that the information produced for such an all-encompassing event can encapsulate every aspect of the show, whilst holding the attentions of each specialised visitor group.

With that in mind, we are currently developing a brand new BTME 'microsite' within the already familiar BIGGA website. Accessible for both exhibitors and visitors alike, the new microsite will contain specific information for both categories of website visitor, which will make for an informative and enriching web experience, containing updated exhibition news 24 hours a day.

Organising the largest and most successful fine turf exhibition and education conference in Europe, has galvanised our commitment to providing both visitors and exhibitors with the most up-to-date information possible, and the new BTME microsite will be a breeding ground of information about next year's event, and with the power of the internet, can, and will be updated as soon as news becomes available.

Already a successful feature on the microsite's parent site, a customisable email request form will be available for all BTME web-visitors to fill in.

By using this facility, visitors can ask to be kept informed of the very latest exhibition news and event information via email. An extremely useful feature if you don't have the spare time to surf the microsite everyday, and would rather just have a look when specific information is available.

Another feature planned for the BTME site is a mini-exhibition directory which will contain;



- Company names
- Contact names
- Contact numbers
- Email links
- Web hyperlinks
- Hall location
- Stand location
- Company profile and product details for each exhibitor

and comments we receive from BTME delegates, visitors and exhibitors, and firmly believe that the spread of information by traditional print methods can continue to be enhanced by digital means through the internet and email.

If you are interested in receiving details when the new BTME microsite launches, please send an email to: btme@bigga.co.uk and include the word 'update' in the subject field.

The brand new site is set to be launched later this month, and will be accessible from the familiar hyperlink on the BIGGA parent website (www.bigga.org.uk), but will now also have its own website address of www.btme.org.uk

This will enable faster access of specific BTME information for both visitors and exhibitors alike, but will help maintain the inherent links under the umbrella of the BIGGA parent website.

Every year, we are continually encouraged by the positive feedback

EMAIL ROUNDUP

Got a question to ask or have some information or comments to pass on? Contact us via email at the relevant address below.

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Above: Paul Smith prepares to welcome Tiger and his colleagues
Left: The familiar Royal Lytham Clubhouse taken by Philip Medcalf
Right: A commemorative plaque in honour Bobby Jones

Royal Lytham and St Annes has a Championship history which is second to none, but for this year the course will have been prepared by a man in charge for his first major Championship ...

A NEW MAN AT THE

HELM

Royal Lytham and St Annes Golf Club is a Rolls Royce among Championship venues. There is barely a significant event in golf which hasn't visited the north west coast course and it can always be guaranteed to produce a worthy winner ... Tony Jacklin, Gary Player and Seve Ballesteros spring readily to mind.

So when the Open Championship returns later this month we can expect more of the same. Nothing much changes at Royal Lytham, certainly not for the worse.

There is one difference this year, however. A significant one, but one which to many may only become apparent when they see a young man standing a few yards from the soon-to-be-crowned Open Champion at the presentation table on the 18th green around 6pm on Open Sunday...no play-off permitting.

For the Open Champion it will be a thrilling moment, the culmination of a lifetime's endeavour ... or perhaps even the sixth consecutive Major Championship and the third leg of the mythical Grand Slam, while for new Head Greenkeeper, Paul Smith, it will signal the end of months of preparation and hard work and confirmation that he is the worthy successor to one of greenkeeping's own legendary figures.

Paul's predecessor Jimmy MacDonald MBE, had been there and done that in greenkeeping over the 26 years he was Head Greenkeeper. Not only had he prepared Lytham for some of its biggest Championships - four Opens, a Ryder Cup, a Curtis Cup, four British Senior Opens, a Women's

British Open and both British Amateur ladies' and men's Championships - but he had presided over a finishing school whose Old Boys are now Head Greenkeepers at some of the biggest and best clubs in the area.

Paul was one of these, being Jimmy's First Assistant when the Open was last played at Lytham in '96, before he left to add management to his greenkeeping credentials with a spell as Course Manager at Furness Golf Club.

Incidentally, many of those Old Boys return during Open week to add their considerable expertise and experience to Lytham's own team.

"They will be rolling, cutting and cutting and I'm certainly looking forward to having them with me for the week," said Paul.

So what thoughts will be going through his head when he walks out onto the 18th green with the new Open Champion?

"Ideally I'd like all my staff to be with me but I know that's not possible. I know I shall be very proud of my own achievements and very proud of the staff's achievements," mused Paul, as we talked in his office, some six weeks before Open week.

"It will be a tremendous highlight



Above: Paul (centre) with the rest of the Royal Lytham greenkeeping team

and I'm sure I'll feel quite emotional when it happens. I'll definitely have to pinch myself.

"I always set myself high, but achievable, targets so I always thought that one day I might be in the position."

The pride will also, no doubt, be tinged with relief after preparations for the Championship were complicated by a couple of nerve testing episodes of near Biblical proportions - flooding which would have had Noah's ancestors dusting off their work tools and the Foot and Mouth Epidemic, which would have had Paul seriously questioning what he'd done to deserve such a headache, but which ultimately remained a safe distance away.

The flooding caused the course to be closed for a total of 40 days because of it - in addition to the 16 days for

which it was closed because of frost and snow.

"The Fylde plane is relatively flat anyway and typically the water table comes close to the surface but this winter it was quite literally at the surface. We were continually pumping water, in vain really, but we felt we had to make the effort," explained Paul, who added that he was also aware of the need for a "tread softly" approach to using machinery on the course when it was closed.

"To have the course closed for such a long time is unheard of and this was just my second winter here," he added ruefully.

The complications this introduced to The Open planning meant Paul had to be adaptable, a skill he honed while at Furness when he had to learn how



A NEW MAN AT THE
HELM



Above: Spectators won't miss a putt, thanks to the high vantage point the seating affords

Below: Lowering in the specialised seating units is a precise business

Right: A green surrounded by some of Royal Lytham's formidable bunkers



best to maximise his resources, both human and financial.

"I had laid down schedules but those went out the window and it was a case of prioritising what I thought were the essential jobs to do and undertake them when possible as well as targeting the drier areas of the course."

Surprisingly, considering the amount of standing water on the course, there were no lasting problems, at least not on the main playing areas.

"There are some areas which we had to turf late on in the spring which haven't quite recovered but these haven't been in play."

The golf course will not be presented markedly differently from the '96 Open.

"I don't have any particular style ideas for presentation and conditioning other than those based on sound links philosophy. I'd like to think that

the general condition of the golf course will be the mark that I leave on the 2001 Open - although that's not to say there won't be room for improvement.

"I'm my own worst critic and there are a million and one things that I see every day that I'd like to act upon but it's a job of prioritising. There are only so many hours in the day."

Indeed the golf course itself will also not be significantly different from the one which faced Tom Lehman five years ago although remarkably the course which boasts the most bunkers on the Open Championship rota has added to its armoury.

"We now have 197 bunkers and in my time here we have added one to the left hand side of the 15th. Stan Eby of European Golf Design, undertakes course architectural alterations," explained Paul. The last Lytham Open



featured 185 of the blighters and they were found by a total of 1618 balls during the four days of the Championship, a record which kept the BIGGA Greenkeeping Support Team busy!

"Apart from that there are very few changes to the course, although it may be a little more forgiving in places in terms of set-up."

Following in the footsteps of someone like Jimmy MacDonald could have been a daunting experience but Paul takes nothing but positives for the fact that he has someone of Jimmy's experience to call upon.

"We speak a lot on the phone and he says it will be a proud moment from him when he's sitting up in the stand watching the golf this time.

"I know it was a massive wrench for Jimmy when he retired and I'm sure he must miss the place but he popped

in for the Lytham Trophy when we were changing holes and he pointed out a few spots which I hadn't considered. I've always tried to switch on to his, and other, knowledge and way of thinking. I do selectively utilise other people's ideas and this, allied to my own academic achievements and experience, is the key to success."

Jimmy told Paul that he was aware that whoever got the job would make changes and, while saying that the hand over was seamless, there are differences in their approaches to the job.

"Jimmy was very much a people's person and I'd like to think I am as well. I like to encourage active, constructive opinions from the people I work with. I think that's important because, in a positive way, it means that all potential angles are covered."

While accepting that the pace of life in general and stresses in work have

increased greatly, Paul is thankful that he has an innate ability to switch off when he gets home of a night.

"I think I'm fortunate because it's a genetic thing. I also try to keep myself on the one level all the time not getting too negative or too positive about things. I don't think you'd be too successful in this profession if you were thin skinned."

Having said that, he hasn't particularly needed a thick skin during his recent spell at the Club.

"The Chairman is the model Chairman and the Secretary has been very helpful to me, while the members, in general, have been very appreciative of the course condition over the last few months."

Unlike the last two Opens at Carnoustie and St Andrews Paul hasn't introduced artificial aids to protect the fairways.

"I think one of the benefits of the winter we have suffered is that we've not had the amount of play we'd normally have and we've come into spring with pretty good sward coverage."

While in a bizarre way the weather helped in this regard, Paul is looking for help over the next few weeks to ensure the world's finest players face typical links conditions when they arrive at the course.

"Firm to hard and hard in places," he says in a manner which suggests its a links land mantra that he has been hearing ever since his greenkeeping career began.

If that is achieved he will be a proud man indeed as he stands at that presentation table.

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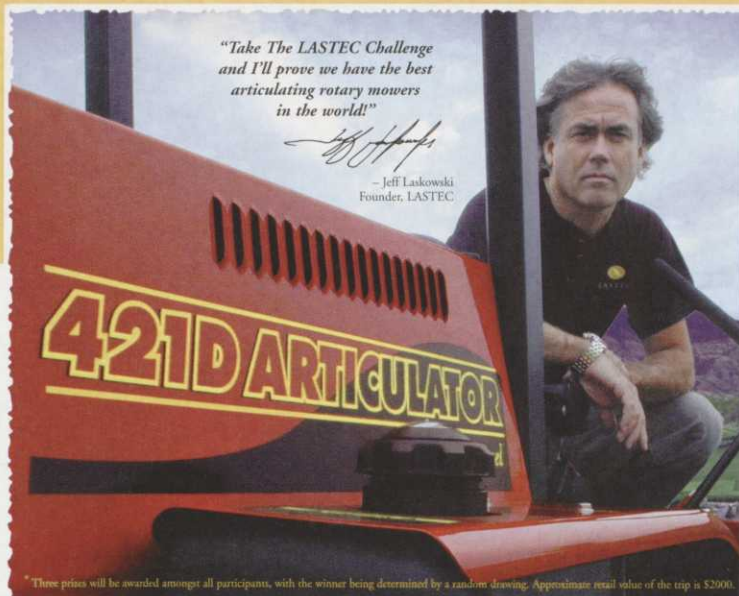
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Pound to a penny, a golfer will have some excuse relating to the tee's surface for a poorly played shot. The object of the exercise is to make sure that tee presentation is top rate. Roland Taylor takes a look at the many ways in which a greenkeeper can achieve this ...

Time for tees



Above: Preparation work goes on during the Benson and Hedges International at the De Vere Belfry

The dictionary definition of a tee is - a cleared spot from which the ball is struck at the beginning of each hole. It is the words 'cleared spot' that sound a discord when it comes to modern greenkeeping. However, this statement becomes clearer when taken in the context of the history of the game. Originally there were no actual tees and the rules stated that the ball be struck

from a given number of club lengths from the previous hole. Evidence indicates that formal tees first appeared in the records in the last years of the 1800s.

On many of the older courses, tees were down the list when it came to priorities and today this has resulted in a number of problems. They were not designed to accommodate today's

increase in players and demand for all-year-round facilities. Heavy traffic on a relatively small area plays havoc with compaction and this, combined with poor drainage, does not bode well for a resilient turf cover. It takes a lot of abuse. The design required a tee to be elevated and often no account was taken of mowing the banking which results in labour-intensive methods having to

Time for tees



Below: Various attachments can be added using the cassette method



be used to keep them looking good.

When it comes to mowing there are a number of choices, the most favoured system being cylinder mowing and collecting the clippings. A mower with a fairly high rate of cuts per metre is ideal and there are plenty of different cutting widths available to suit specific requirements.

In recent years there have been a number of units introduced that use a basic power source to which either cassettes or attachments can be added. They're usually a choice of cylinder mower units with various numbers of blades plus the advantage of being able to fit other turfcare equipment such as verticutters, scarifiers and aerators. These machines



are ideal for tee maintenance as they can be easily transported with a range of attachments by trailer or utility vehicle. When considering this type of system, the important feature to look out for is the time taken and tools required changing from one piece of kit to another. Some only take less than a minute.

Dare one suggest that the roller propelled rotary mowers that are now available could be considered for use as an alternative mower for some tees? These have the added advantage that they also pick up any leaves or other debris. It should be pointed out that if this cutting system is used the blade needs to be kept very sharp. The rotary principle is suitable for

banking, either in the form of a hover mower or wheeled model. For very awkward areas it may be necessary to use a hand-held strimmer and the backpack versions are especially worth considering for these types of locations.

On large tees the fairway style of unit can be used, especially if they have collection facilities. There are a number of smaller triple ride-on mowers now available using either cylinder or rotary cutting units and some of these have been specifically designed with tees in mind, especially where banking is involved.

If new tees are being considered, how they are going to be cost effectively mown needs to be addressed at

PHOTOCAST TEE SIGNS

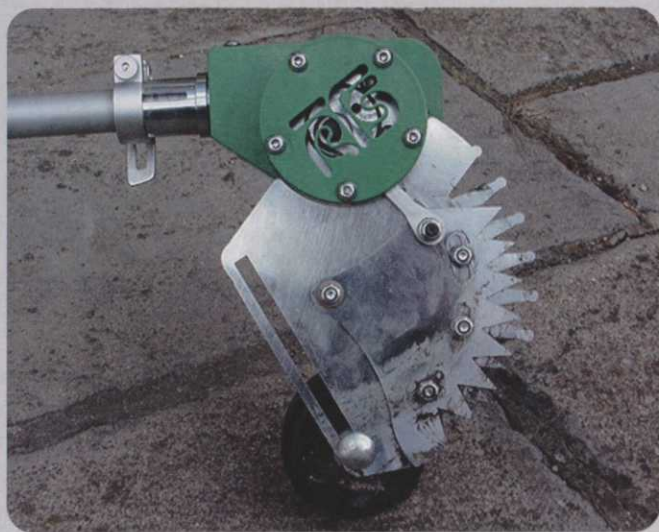
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Time for tees



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the point of planning. This will avoid a lot of problems that could occur after they have become established.

Cutting heights on tees is important, bearing in mind the volume and concentration of traffic using them.

The leaf cover needs to be kept high so the plants can gain as much nutrient as possible through photosynthesis. Somewhere between 6-13mm is the suggested scale.

Bunker surrounds are another area that will need special attention when it comes to mowing. Rotaries have already been mentioned in respect of any banking but often there is a lip or edge that will need to be kept trimmed. This could be done with a pair of edging shears but this is likely to be a long labour-intensive operation if there are a several bunker surrounds to be trimmed.

A number of edging machines are now available that would be ideal for this job. These generally use a vertical-mounted blade that operates in conjunction with an edging guide, either the wheels or rollers set to the depth of cut. As they are not self-propelled the operator can gauge his walking speed to obtain the best finish. This method of edging certainly speeds up the operation considerably.

It is easy to dismiss the role of tees. Generally they are the first sight the players have of a course, so their upkeep and general appearance are important as they say a lot about the rest of the course and how it is maintained.

From a golfer's point-of-view, the tee is the starting point of a trip into the unknown, certainly mentally and often physically. It is his introduction

to a particular hole, one that he hopes he will not fall into - his action can make or break what follows out on the course. Certainly on the first tee there can be an element of fear and trepidation plus there is often an audience of other players waiting to tee off. The tee is the one point where golfers cannot blame the results of their play on the condition of the playing surface. Why? Because the ball is on top of a plastic or wooden peg a few centimetres above the turf and the only time in the game when it is not in direct contact with the turf. Pound to a penny there will be some excuse relating to the tee's surface for a poorly played shot, so the object of the exercise is to make sure the presentation is top rate. There is plenty of equipment on the market to help achieve this, plus save time.