

something different and some possess some of the most spectacular scenery to be found anywhere.

"We play an annual Greenkeepers' match, playing the courses on rotation, while we all meet here for a Christmas lunch," said Stewart.

All cope with the difficulties and complication island life brings.

"The biggest thing is haulage and the cost of bringing over fertiliser, seed and the like. We're very lucky as we have our own sand quarry nearby and analysis from Rigby Taylor's Scottish-based lab has shown that it is very good quality with just the right particle size for top dressing," said Stewart, who added that the clubs had long considered the benefits of grouping together to purchase bulk orders but that such a plan hadn't yet got off the ground.

"I'm sure if it were left to the greenkeepers we would be able to make it work," he explained, adding that similar plans for purchasing equipment like a vertidrain, which clubs would only use perhaps a couple of times a year, also had the potential to work.

Machinery servicing and grinding used to be carried out by Shiskine's former assistant but since he retired Nairn Brown had taken the machinery away in the winter and returned it fully serviced and ready.

"If we ever have a break down we'd only have to wait a couple of days for Nairn Brown to come and fix it so it's not an issue at all. If we ever have a problem we do borrow or lend machinery to each other," said Stewart, who was demonstrating the spirit of friendly co-operation at the time by cutting the greens at nearby Machrie Bay Golf Club to allow Head man, David Jeffrey, a holiday.

Not that David would need to return the favour as Stewart can't recall the last time he had more than the odd day off in holiday.

"Holidays? A day off here and there but I've not been away for a full week for years. I don't need holidays," he said, spoken with the conviction of a man who knew that his wife and two children were not within earshot.

MACHINERY INVENTORY

Kubota 5030 with loader
 Ford 1520
 Wiedenmann Terra Spike
 Groundsman Tractor Aerator
 Charterhouse Greens Slitter
 Pro Pass 180 Top Dresser
 Charterhouse Pro Seed Top Dresser
 2 John Deere 220 Greens Machines
 John Deere 260B Tees Machine
 2 Allan Hover Mowers
 2 Echo Strimmers
 Two Tonne Trailer
 Royer Soil Shredder
 Powered Riddle
 2 Toro 3200D Greens and Tees Mowers
 John Deere 3235 Fairway Mower
 Thatchaway Verticut Units
 Wessex Rotary Mower
 2 Farmura F25 Sprayers
 Ryan Turfcutter
 Ransomes Gang Mowers
 Huxley Tv36 Scarifier
 Hunter Jupiter Grinder

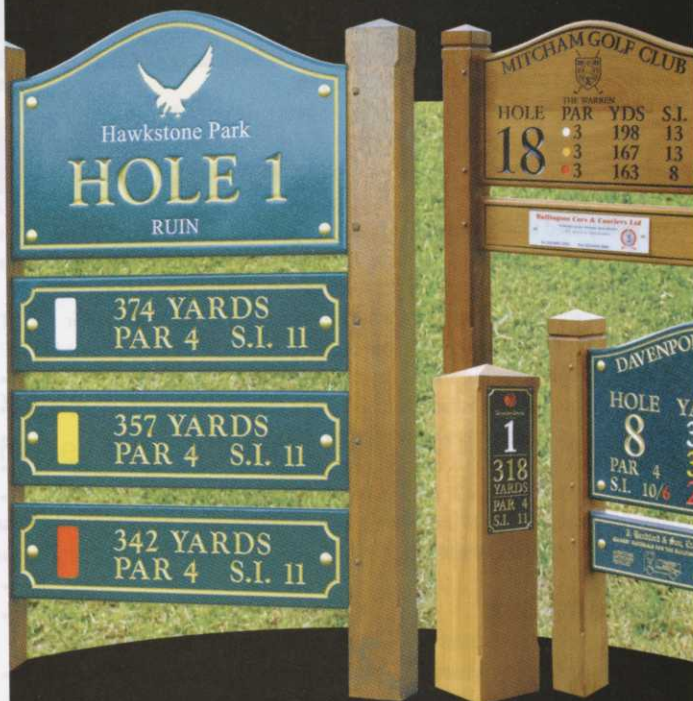


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Fine Tuning for Fine Turf: Greens Brushing

John Lockyer discusses the need for greens brushing.



There are many cultural manicuring practices geared toward the improvement of fine turf playability characteristics. Typically, a combination of mowing, grooming, verticutting, top dressing and rolling are employed. They all are supposed to work in conjunction with each other so that the sward is well regulated, uniform, consistent and exhibits good playing qualities. However, in certain situations there may be another treatment that will add extra performance: brushing.

BRUSHING - A TURF MANAGERS PERSPECTIVE

When we think of brushing as a cultural practice we normally associate it with the incorporation of topdressing material, dew removal or perhaps lifting seedheads of annual-meadow grass for removal by subsequent mowing. In the southern regions of the USA, brushing (as part of a programme) is much more widely used to help control the heavy turf nap or grain that is formed by stoloniferous grasses such as Bermuda. The effects of this grain are reductions in both pace and trueness, markedly reducing ball to surface quality factors.

Grain potential of cool-season grasses is very much less than that of their warm-season cousins, indeed most cool season grasses that are well groomed and regularly lightly verticut should never display grain characteristics. However, in some situations (and particularly in parts of continental Europe) creeping species such as creeping bentgrass, may sometimes be prone to grain development. As the UK climate alters and becomes more "continental" (particularly in the south), will we perhaps eventually see some turf composition changes where the potential to form grain actually happens? Indeed, there are already some signs of this taking place in some instances.

THE ASSOCIATED COSTS

Costs associated with brushing are very low in relation to improved speed and quality, which often results. Rotary bar brushes are available from most ride on mower manufacturers to use in conjunction with the grooming bar. Alternatively, systems such as the Greentek cartridge product are very effective. Or, perhaps like many others, access to a "Grainskeeper" hydraulic sweeper and/or static drawn units is possible, normally used in the top dressing process.

PERFORMING REGULAR BRUSHING

The frequency of brushing will depend on the condition of the sward. Brushing could begin in spring on a regular basis with a continuance into the summer and autumn months. If brushing is to be performed separately, consider a bi-weekly approach, alternating the direction of travel, immediately followed by mowing.

BRUSH SELECTION

The key for brush selection and design is to get both brush stiffness and brush-turf angle correct. Too stiff and the turf may well suffer from bruising, too soft and the benefits are reduced. The angle is important so that the brush filament makes contact with oncoming grass leaves; and does not simply slide over. When looking at brush heads, you should try to judge by feel the right stiffness. Ideally, the brush should feel between yard broom and house broom stiffness.

ASSESSING THE NEED

The author has sometimes observed light grain in well-managed green swards, even where regular manicuring operations are being applied. Most commonly such grain is associated with continually mowing in one or limited directions. To assess any such light grain, use your hand to brush against the grain. When brushing against any grain it is likely that you will see more of the thatch/soil surface when looking through the canopy and perhaps feel the sward is not as dense as you thought.

THE BENEFITS OF BRUSHING

In brief, the benefits of brushing are as follows:

- Reduces turf grain where it occurs
- May help produce more uniform leaf texture
- Can increase sward density
- May reduce the tendency towards thatch accumulation
- Enhances the quality of mower cut and reduces the surface area of damaged leaf tissue
- Promotes upward growth and lifts procumbent growth
- Improves ball roll pace, trueness and green consistency
- Lifts more Poa annua seed heads ahead of mowing
- Is less damaging to plant tissue than verticutting or grooming during periods of plant stress, i.e. drought
- Produces very low levels of disturbance maybe reducing the risk of annual-meadow grass germination.
- Can be combined with mowing cheaply and easily, reducing costs but maximising playability benefits
- May help reduce some undesirable grasses (Yorkshire fog, perennial ryegrass, wide leaf textured native bents)

Green speed-readings often increase up to one foot in some cases with much improved trueness and consistency. Most clubs are trying to improve these key performance attributes but can mistakenly look to lower heights of cut alone in order to do so. However, as with any management technique, it is recommended that benchmarking is undertaken, before and after brushing. Consider recording green speed, trueness (degree of separation between balls used in Stimp meter readings) along with cultural conditions (soil temperature, moisture levels, height of cut, sward composition, etc).

CONCLUSIONS

Brushing offers another range of benefits to supplement those from the more traditional manicuring treatments, so essential to maximising playing quality of putting surfaces. Brushing can also enhance presentation.

John Lockyer is STRI's Turfgrass Agronomist for the Central Southern Region and Home Counties.



Regional Finalists: back row, left to right: Graham Brumpton, Stephen Eager, Kenneth Gilroy, Steven Stroomer and Barrie Lewis. Front row, left to right: James Billington, Mike Emptage and Abigail Crosswood



They Think It's All Over... It Is Now!

The competition for this year's Toro Student of the Year has been fierce, as the level of entrants continually improves. Melissa Toombs witnessed a tense final at BIGGA HOUSE.

Being a student is fun. No, not because you're expected to drink copious amounts of alcohol and stay up till the early hours of the morning - although that is a lot of fun! - but because you're continually learning and having to push yourself to achieve the qualification you've longed for that, in time, will form the basis of your career.

No-one, ideally, wants to still be working on their computer at 3am, realising the essay they're writing isn't turning out quite as they'd expected, and having to resign themselves to the fact that this isn't their best assignment. 'I just didn't have time,' springs to mind as the most widely used excuse when a student is confronted with their 'less than best' work. Everyone needs a kick up the bum now and again, to be given encouragement and pointed in the right direction but, each student is responsible for their own work and time management. If you really want the qualification, you find the time and put the effort in. This year's Toro Student of the Year Regional Finalists, are a prime example of what dedication and hard work can achieve.

Eight anxious finalists visited BIGGA HOUSE on September 17 and 18, were quizzed and probed by our four judges, BIGGA Chief Executive, John Pemberton, Iain McLeod, Chairman of BIGGA's Education Committee; and Peter Mansfield and Bruce Jamieson, representing Toro, and were given the task of completing a survey of Aldwark Manor GC (evaluating nine of the holes).

After a gruelling wait, finalists: Mike Emptage, Barrie Lewis, Abigail Crosswood, Graham Brumpton, James Billington, Steven Stroomer, Stephen Eager and Kenneth Gilroy, were put out of their misery as Education and Training Manager, Ken Richardson, announced the winners.

Runners-up were Abigail Crosswood (18), from Newquay, Cornwall, and James Billington (23), from Northwich, Cheshire.

Abigail works as an Assistant Greenkeeper at Newquay GC, has completed her NVQ Level 2 at Duchy College Training Agency and has been accepted to study a foundation degree in Sports Turf Science, online. Abi was also part of the BIGGA Open Support Team at Hoylake this year.

James is Assistant Greenkeeper at Portal Premier Golf and Country Club, Tarporley, Cheshire, and has just finished his NVQ Level 3 at Reaseheath College. James and Abigail both win a trip to Harrogate Week 2007, where they will be invited to attend the Continue to Learn seminars and workshops as well as the evening banquet.

Overall winner and Toro Student of the Year for 2006 was Mike Emptage (25), from Ramsgate, Kent.

Mike, who entered the competition while working at St Augustine's GC, Ramsgate, Kent, has just finished his NVQ Level 2 at Hadlow College. Mike's amazing prize involves an eight-week trip to the USA, where, for six weeks, the University of Massachusetts will be home, as he completes a residential turf management study course. The trip also includes visits to the Toro Headquarters in Minneapolis, the Toro Irrigation Division and to the GCSAA Golf Industry Show in Anaheim, in February 2007.



National Chairman, Richard Whyman, congratulates Toro Student of the Year 2006, Mike Emptage

Still Sinking In

2006 Toro Student of the Year winner, Mike Emptage, is still stunned by his achievement, as Melissa Toombs found out.

Toro Student of the Year has seen standards rise once more in its 17th year. Judges were left with some tough decisions to make at this year's final and all competitors were commended for their hard work.

Mike, who took golf up in his late teens and plays off 22, was working as a Chef when he realised that this was a sport and an industry that he wanted to become more involved in.

"I'd completed NVQ Level 2 in Catering and worked within the industry for four years," said this year's winner.

"You had to work loads of hours to be able to get a decent wage out of it and I'd had enough of being stuck in a hot kitchen on nice sunny days," added a still overwhelmed Mike.

So Mike made some changes. His friend was working for what is now their local council, doing grass maintenance on the verges of the road and Mike took the opportunity to get out of the kitchen and into the open air.

Mike, who is also a Coast Rescue Officer in Margate - on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year - mowed lawns, football pitches, golf courses and cricket pitches, for three years. During this time Mike's passion for golf grew, "I really enjoyed it, the natural progression was for me to go and work at a golf club," explained Mike.

At the age of 23 Mike began to look for greenkeeping jobs. "I realised that the change of career would mean a money drop but I looked at the pros, like being able to do a NVQ and career progression in golf course management."

A major issue for Mike was being able to watch people enjoy the work he had done by playing on the course, rather than littering the area he had previously mowed.

He applied for an Assistant Greenkeeper post at St Augustine's, Ramsgate - "I'd already completed my spraying certificates through the council. I got the job and completed my NVQ," gleamed Mike.

"John Millen, from Hadlow College, was my assessor, my work is currently being verified. I was keen to do a few courses so I also completed my First Aid.

"I found out about BIGGA when I came across the magazine (GI) at the club, I phoned up and John explained that each club can arrange for their staff to become members, so I spoke to Course Manager, Robert Tranckle and he signed me up.

"I definitely want to go for my Level 3, however I'm in the process of moving clubs," explained Mike, who's just got a job as an Assistant Greenkeeper at North Foreland GC.

It was his tutor, John Millen who nominated Mike for Toro Student of the Year.

"When John explained what was involved, that's when I really started to knuckle down and do the best for myself, I had support from the rest of



Runner up, James Billington



Runner up, Abigail Crosswood

the greenstaff. When I got through to the final, I thought, this can't be right," said a modest Mike.

A father of two - Freya (13) and Georgia (4) - Mike has his hands full. At first when he told his family he'd won, they didn't believe him and he couldn't quite believe it himself having only been in the industry for a year and a half.

"They kept saying you're joking, are you serious? And then I got lots of text messages congratulating me. They were shocked at first but are over the moon now," smiled Mike. Mike will miss his family when he goes to America for two months but they are concentrating on the positive effect

the University course will have on his career - his wife Patricia is 100% behind him.

"You can't prepare yourself for winning. You just think I'm going to have a go and do my best. I was speechless when they announced the winner - it's a realisation that I can do this. It's fantastic, a wicked feather in my cap."

Looking to the future, Mike eventually wants to become a Course Manager - it won't be long now Mike, look what you've achieved in just a year and a half!



Back row, left to right: Stephen Eager, Kenneth Gilroy, Steven Stroomer, Ken Richardson, David Wood, Bruce Jamieson, John Pemberton, Ian McLeod and Peter Mansfield
Front row, left to right: Graham Brumpton, James Billington, Mike Emptage, Abigail Crosswood and Barrie Lewis

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Tony McLure, Challenge Trophy winner for Best Gross score

BIGGA National Championship 2006

FOR THE BIGGA CHALLENGE TROPHY



Spectator at this year's National Championship, Assistant Editor, Melissa Toombs, gives her take on the two-day event and chats to the 2006 winner.

As we approached Burton-on-Trent GC, panicked by our late arrival - a three-hour drive to travel 85 miles! - It seemed we weren't the only ones who had been caught in the jam. Board of Management member, Bert Cross, was furiously scribbling over the pre-planned tee off times, adjusting them accordingly to cater for the players late and early arrivals.

Frustrated by their delay but enthusiastic about starting the tournament, the weather improved throughout day one for our competitors. A pleasant afternoon followed a brisk and drizzly morning, as the clouds dissolved to make way for a spell of sunshine.

This year's BIGGA National Champion, Tony McLure, Head Greenkeeper at Whickham GC, felt that the weather during the Championship helped everyone, "it softened the course up and stopped the ball bouncing as much," he said.

This was much the case on day two, the temperature stayed moderate, the course remained softened and sunshine and showers created a rainbow.

Tony, who won the 36 Hole Aggregate, Gross and was part of the Regional winning team (Northern), at the 1999 National Championship held at Carden Park GC, has entered the competition only three times.

So what did this year's winner think of Burton-on-Trent's course managed by BIGGA Board of Management member, Gavin Robson?

"The course was quite tight and you were able to plot your route. I thought the greens were in excellent condition," said Tony. "It was quick with some demanding pin positions, a well prepared course."

Tony, who has been working at Whickham GC since 1990, when he took up the position of Assistant Greenkeeper, felt that the greenstaff at Burton-on-Trent would have liked to have done more but, although the weather helped the competitors, it prohibited the greenstaff from getting more involved throughout the Championship.

Winner of the prestigious National Lytham Trophy in 1993, Tony was pleased with his overall performance at this year's competition. "I played within myself, kept the ball in play and out of the trees, and I remained patient. I think I'll definitely come back next year."



Nick Gates, Challenge Cup winner for Best Nett score

The annual event, sponsored by Ransomes Jacobsen and held, this year, at Burton-on-Trent GC on October 2 and 3, attracted over 60 greenkeepers from all over Britain.

A LITTLE BIRDIE TOLD ME...

Grafter greenkeepers Frank Kempster and Graham Bloom spent the Monday night cuddled up with Course Manager, Gavin Robson's coat in the Burton-on-Trent work sheds, ready for an early rise on the Tuesday!

THE WINNERS:

BIGGA National Champion
Challenge Trophy Winner Best Gross Score
Tony McLure Total 147

Challenge Cup Winner Best Nett Score
Nick Gates 141

Gross over 36 holes
2nd Mike Hughes 148
3rd Adam Jones 152

Nett over 36 holes
2nd Simon Dye 142
3rd Nigel Broadwith 148

Monday, October 2
1st class Scr to 6 Handicap category
Brian Turner 73

2nd class 7 to 12 handicap
David Goodchild 74

3rd class 13 to 24
Ross McCarthy 73

Tuesday, October 3
1st class Scr to 6 Handicap category
Craig Wroughton 72

2nd class 7 to 12 handicap
Carl Small 73



3rd class 13 to 24
John Harrison 71

Nearest the Pin Day 1
Adam Jones

Longest Drive Day 1
John Harrison

Nearest the Pin Day 2
Mike Hughes

Longest Drive Day 2
Wayne Sewell



Regional Trophy Day One only 8 best nett scores

Winners - Midland Region total 592:

- Nigel Broadwith
- David Goodchild
- Paul Frith
- Barry Holt
- Mike Hughes
- Adam Jones
- Ross McCarthy
- Simon Woolley

Runners up - South East Region 625:

- David Badham
- Tony Barker
- Nick Gates
- Paul Larsen
- Dylan Rennick
- Paul Robinson
- Wayne Sewell
- Brian Turner



A busy Burton-on-Trent GC



Tony McLure (left) ends the tournament on a high



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Golf Park Noulen, Switzerland

What a Picture, What a Photograph

The first BIGGA Photographic Exhibition produced some exceptional entries and the 2007 BIGGA calendar will feature some of the best.



Fulwell GC

The BIGGA Photographic Competition, launched earlier this year, saw a refreshingly high quality of entries from as far a field as Hanoi in Vietnam, while the ultimate winning entry was also from outside of the UK!

Judged by Alan Birch, whose idea the competition was, and Eric Hepworth, a professional golf course photographer, whose portfolio of work is second to none. Editor, Scott MacCallum chaired the panel but left the decisions to those with more photographic skill.

The winning entry came from Steven Tierney, of Golf Park Noulen, in Switzerland, with his excellent picture of Swiss hills mirrored in a lake on his course.

"I would have loved to have taken this picture myself although I wouldn't have thought to have taken it from where he did," said Eric.

"The reflection brings you into the picture and the mountains are mirrored perfectly. Steven obviously has an eye for a picture and I couldn't have taken this picture any better," said Eric.

Runner-up was a view across the fabulous Royal County Down course, taken from the new 16th tee, by Assistant Greenkeeper, Gary Crawford.

"I love the way the picture shows the quality of the work done at County Down. I also like the way Gary has captured the magnificent cloud on the left hand side of the mountains," said Alan.

Third place went to Iain Barr, of a view across his course in Largs on the west coast of Scotland, which was highly rated by both Eric and Alan.

"This is a lovely shot out over the golf course with the Firth of Clyde and mountains in the