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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Welcome



Golf on the Up Again?

We're often reported on how the game of golf is in the doldrums and how that has had a direct effect on the greenkeeping industry and BIGGA itself, so it is good to find a survey which appears to indicate some light at the end of the tunnel.

Golf, it seems, is in line to become the number one sport for British men with more than half the male UK population teeing off on a regular basis.

The survey, carried out for the Quinn Direct British Masters, for which BIGGA Vice Chairman, Kenny Mackay and his team at The Belfry, are currently busily preparing, found that 51% of men between the ages of 20 and 50 own golf clubs and claim to play more than once a month. That figure goes up to 65% for those over 30.

The survey also makes the point of making a cost comparison between playing golf and watching football. A season ticket for Chelsea and Arsenal is over £1000 while a season ticket for The Belfry comes in under half of that. When it comes to watching or following the game, 40% of the men asked follow major golf tournaments.

Asked which sporting star they most admired golf again came out on top with Tiger Woods picking up 39% of the vote, 3% ahead of David Beckham with Johnny Wilkinson third with 17%. Now this was obviously carried out before the Lewis Hamilton phenomenon hit town but it is still very pleasing that a non-British golfer should come in ahead of Mr Posh Spice. The fact that the likes of Justin Timberlake, Catherine Zeta Jones, Chris Evans and Ant and Dec also play golf does all to its street cred.

It all indicates that golf is on the up again. And if it is true it's very good news as the game has been stuck in a rut for some time now. Memberships numbers have been down and waiting lists and joining fees are all but a thing of the past at all but the most exclusive clubs. That doesn't help clubs to produce consistent revenue streams, nor does those infamous 2 for 1 deals that have led to golf clubs cutting their throats to attract loss leader business. Golfers have been doing their sums and realising that you can play golf regularly much cheaper as a visitor than as a golf club member.

That can't be right so hopefully if there is a new surge of popularity the concept of being a golf club member will be embraced again and help to stabilise the game.

Wouldn't it be great to see a host of young golfers, welcomed by their local clubs, playing after school, having lessons and enjoying the game which gives us all our living?

However golf clubs will need to become much more friendly places to visit so when people young or old drop in they are welcomed and encouraged.

Scott MacCallum, Editor

NEW DESIGNS

Final year students, studying the BTEC National Diploma in Horticulture at Writtle College, have successfully completed the design and build of three new gardens on the grounds of the College.

The students, who carried out the build as an assessed unit within their course, had to design a garden to a client brief, draw up the specifications and detail drawings, quantify the materials required and then build the 6x6 metre garden in ten days.



Left to Right: Michael Smith, Fay Dyke (designer), Stuart Irvine in their "Inside Out Garden" sponsored by Hanging Garden Nurseries.

All materials were supplied by Writtle College and included recycled materials from previous projects. The plants were sponsored by Hanging Garden Nurseries Ltd, Premier plants UK and Grenville Nursery, all local employers located within a couple of miles of the College.

The Gardens will be used as outdoor classrooms, showing design principles, use of materials, construction issues and horticultural maintenance tasks.

BIGGA HQ TELEPHONE EXTENSIONS

As you should already be aware, BIGGA HQ recently had a new telephone system fitted. When you phone the usual number: 01347 833800, it will ask if you know the extension of the person you would like to speak to. For reference the extensions of BIGGA staff are printed below:

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CLOSE SHAVE

Steve Beverly, Head Greenkeeper at Immingham Golf Club, turned up for work recently to find their secondary greenshed had been broken into, the front door was smashed off and a triple mower had been stolen. The culprits had broken into the side of the shed, started the mower using a screwdriver and rammed it into the door, breaking it off its hinges and then driven off on the mower.

“We followed the tyre tracks off the golf course and down a path to the town centre where we discovered it had been used to ram over a concrete bollard. After a quick search of the surrounding area (on board our Toro Workman!) we took a car out for a drive around to see if we could find it. While we were out, I got a phone call from the police saying they had picked it up on the far side of town (about a mile away) and it had been taken to a local garage.

We now have the machine back and I have to say that it is not as badly damaged as we thought, the front units are badly bent and there is some bodywork damage, but it does still run!”, said Steve.



After inspection the cost to repair the mower was roughly £3000

“Looking back at it all it is quite amusing because out of all the machinery they could have taken they probably stole the slowest machine, and I am also surprised that the engine ran for that long as we have problems with it.”

SIR STEVE REDGRAVE LAUNCHES THE CARRICK



Sir Steve Redgrave helped launch Scotland’s newest championship standard golf course, The Carrick at Cameron House on the shores of Loch Lomond, when it played host to the opening event of the Golden Golf Tour recently.

The Carrick, which is part of the De Vere Cameron House Resort is now open to the public. Designed by acclaimed golf architect, Doug Carrick, the course uniquely, straddles both the Lowlands and the Highlands of Scotland.

At £7 million, the course is believed to be the most expensive ever constructed in the UK and will, for the first time, make the Loch Lomond golfing experience accessible to all.

GREENING THE GAMES

The 2012 Olympics is now looming with work beginning on the Olympic park and stadium site. The TGA is one of three Associations representing the horticulture industry on the Olympics’ ‘Greening the Games’ steering group.

Working alongside the Horticultural Trades Association (HTA), the British Association of Landscape Industries (BALI) and other industry partners, it is behind the campaign which aims to showcase and achieve a lasting legacy for UK horticulture. Its success has placed landscaping issues high on the agenda and the TGA is pleased to be representing the turf industry.

One of the main reasons the TGA decided to join the Greening the Games group was to endeavour to have our quality standards specified on all the landscaping contracts associated with the 2012 Olympic Games. As an industry body representing nearly 60 turf companies and affiliated businesses across the UK, the TGA feels its standards will give contractors peace of mind when choosing TGA turf. They’ve become more widely used as landscapers and specifiers realised that they can widen their supply base by not restricting themselves to company-specific turf standards. They can also feel reassured that the association is on hand to help with technical and legislative queries should they arise.

The key message from the Olympic delivery bodies is their desire for a sustainable games and the need for the UK horticulture and landscape industry to demonstrate how it can help to deliver that sustainability. There is particular interest in how trees, shrubs and turf can help deliver a carbon-neutral games.

DEAL SIGNED

Sherriff Amenity has announced the extension of their agreement to be the exclusive suppliers of chemicals and turf care products to Crown Golf. The agreement, which also includes the supply of fertilisers, has been in place since spring 2006 and was due to be reviewed in the early months of 2009.

Crown Golf (Bennelong Golf Partners) is Europe's largest golf operator, currently managing 32 properties, with the equivalent of 57, 18 hole golf courses from high end resort, member and pay for play style facilities. The deal gives all Crowns Course Managers the ability to select the appropriate product for any given situation, on their particular course and to meet their own particular budgetary requirement.



Mark Pyrah, Sherriff Amenity Director (left) and Paul Copsey, Crown Golf's Regional Course Manager

GRASS ROOTS SHOW

Technical Surfaces were recently invited to attend the Grass Roots Football Show 2007 held at the Ricoh Arena, home of Coventry FC. The show – now in its second year – was a great success, attracting people and sports clubs from all over the country.

A number of footballing greats attended the show and provision was made for some areas of the hall to be given over to demonstrations of coaching and technical skills. Former England manager Graham Taylor was present and ran some of the coaching courses for the entertainment of the crowd, together with his BBC Radio 5 Live colleague and former Wolverhampton Wanderers striker Don Goodman.

Technical Surfaces were able to link up with TigerTurf, the UK's leading artificial grass manufacturer, who echoed the sentiment of the successful and interesting show.

A further Exhibition is planned for the summer of 2008 using the even bigger venue of the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham such has been the success of the show this year.

BIGGA SW & SOUTH WALES REGION

A Health and Safety Workshop will take place on Wednesday, September 26 at Bridgwater College, Cannington Centre.

This is a tried and tested workshop that proved to be extremely popular when held in other BIGGA regions. This will be a "hands on" and "interactive" approach to gaining H&S awareness with quality trainers, Frank Newbury, Jon Allbutt and Steve Hasell.

The day will be split into four parts: Dealing with Members Complaints on Health and Safety Issues; Health and Safety in the Maintenance Facilities; Compiling Risk Assessments for on the Golf Course and Emergency Action Plan and Accident Reporting.

Delegates fee per person: £25 BIGGA/GCMA/IOG Members and £35 Non Members.

To attend this workshop please send cheques payable to: BIGGA South West & South Wales Region and return to 8 Westmere Crescent Burnham on Sea Somerset TA8 EA.

GREENKEEPERS CLINCH CUP



Paul Dyter of Course Care presents the cup to Tony Gadd, Chairman South Coast Section. Can the Secretaries even things next year?

The annual Course Care Cup was held this year at Upavon Golf Club. The match, sponsored by Course Care is played between the BIGGA South Coast Section and Wessex Secretaries. Running for ten years with honours even, this year's match was a big one and was decided right at the last minute with a half on the 18th, the Greenkeepers winning.

GOLF MANAGEMENT TROPHY

This year's Golf Management Competition for the South West Section saw 17 teams take part and was held at Long Ashton GC. The day was thoroughly enjoyed by all the participating teams and our thanks go to The Scotts Company (UK) Limited who sponsor this event.



The members of the Long Ashton winning team and Mark Rayner who presented the prizes on behalf of The Scotts Company

The winning team received £250 worth of Scott's products for their club together with individual prizes for team members. This year's winners were Long Ashton GC who retained the trophy, second was The Kendleshire and third place went to Taunton and Pickeridge GC.



GOBI DESERT ULTRA-MARATHON SUCCESS

Paul Dawson, Managing Director of Rolawn Limited, has successfully completed the 250km Gobi Desert (China) ultra-marathon in 38hrs 22mins 43secs - finishing in 21st place out of an international field of over 180 competitors from 23 different countries.

The Gobi March is a self-supported footrace across 250 kilometres of Gobi Desert in China, consisting of six stages, lasting seven days. Each competitor had to carry their own gear, food and clothing in a backpack. Competitors had to be fully self-supported throughout the event, the only assistance provided was water, tents and medical assistance. The average backpack carried by the runners weighed about 25 pounds.

“The Gobi March has been an epic experience of a lifetime, so many aspects of the race were unpredictable, the weather has been extreme. After months of dryness, a storm hit while we were going over a 3,800m mountain pass, instead of blazing desert heat we were hit by rain, sleet and even snow, followed the next day by stifling heat with no wind.



“The local culture has been fascinating and we have experienced incredible hospitality from the people, we stayed in the homes of many locals during the week. Another outstanding feature of the race has been the racers themselves, those you might have expected to make it dropped out, while others who you expected to give up stuck with it to the very end.

“An amazing amount of improvisation was also often needed during the race, at times even the most high tech equipment had to be replaced by local technology - the donkey cart, used to help everyone across swollen rivers and camels were used to bring competitors in trouble through altitude sickness down from the mountains. I can honestly say that the whole experience was unlike anything I’ve ever experienced before and I’m rather relieved to have finished in one piece and pleased to have been able to raise money for The Neuroblastoma Society while doing so” said Paul.



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SMOKING LEGISLATION

The new smoking legislation has now become law and, as a confirmed few or so fags a day man, I have a slant on how things are in Australia, as witnessed during a trip I had there last year. Because they have put a whole new interpretation on no smoking on a golf course debate and they sell food and beverages on the course, the law in Australia requires that the control of this smelly and unpopular activity has to be extended to the course as well as all buildings. Now it seems there is a grey area on how this should be applied and therefore each club has made up their own rules for how the law would be interpreted. The club I had the pleasure to play said that you were not allowed to smoke on the tee, fairway, in a bunker or on the green. However, you could smoke to your heart's content in the rough, what a result, the perfect rule to suit my game they must have had me in mind when they thought up that corker.

Now imagine the scene I was looking for my new found friend, Wayne's, ball, you guessed it, in the rough, so we thought we'd have a break and a wee fag at the same time. Well we were both puffing away when over the hill at a rate of knots came a buggy from the direction of the clubhouse. Wayne shouts at the top of his voice it's the bloody fag patrol and throws his fag down so's not to get caught. When the buggy turned up it was the smallest kid in the world ever allowed to drive on a jolly round the course. Anyway the fag had caught some tinder and was billowing clouds of smoke from around his feet, it looked so funny it made me wonder why they chose the rough as the best place really. Now another club had taken a different approach to the law and decided that you couldn't smoke on the even holes but it was perfectly ok to smoke on the odd holes. With the final club choosing the following method i.e. they drew an imaginary line through the hole and you could smoke on the left of that line but not on the right - what a nightmare I can see a few smoking rules being argued on that one. I suppose like the rules of golf if you were unsure you could take another fag and ask for a ruling when you got back to the clubhouse.

Billy McMillan, BIGGA Chairman

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY TURF PROGRAMME

Former Writtle College student, Daniel Weston, who studied NVQ Level 2 and 3 in Sports Turf, has been awarded a place on the Ohio State University Global Turf programme.

Daniel, aged 20 from North Weald, Essex, learnt about the programme while studying at the College. He will travel to Ohio State University in mid-June for an induction, he will then go on to start his internship at Pinehurst Resort located in North Carolina, which in 2005 played host to the US Open. Daniel will work as a Trainee Greenkeeper alongside Steve Wilson, a Superintendent at Pinehurst and also a former student of Writtle College.

The Pinehurst Resort has a total eight golf courses and although Daniel will be training mainly on Course No.5, he will also spend some time away from Course No. 5, this will include volunteering for maintenance duties at the Women's US Open which is being held at Pine Needles, one of the resorts neighbouring properties.

Daniel said: "I am dyslexic and through support from the College I was able to successfully



complete the NVQ Level 2 and 3. I was encouraged to apply for the programme at Ohio State while at the College, but wanted to gain experience in the UK first. I'm now ready to move on and taking part in the Ohio State programme will enable me to gain an international perspective of the sports turf industry. It will definitely enhance my career prospects."

The Programme brings 19-28 year old greenkeepers from 32 countries around the world. The trainees gain practical training and an opportunity to attend Ohio State for three months of classes related to the turf grass industry. Daniel will have his accommodation arranged for him when he gets there and be part of a team of seven trainees, from different countries, training at Pinehurst Resort this summer.

FLACKWELL HEATH GC'S LOCAL KNOWLEDGE PROVES DECISIVE

The Midland Region Golf Management Trophy day, sponsored for the 9th successive year by Scotts UK Professional, was held at Flackwell Heath Golf Club, High Wycombe on July 5.



The winning team, left to right: Ian Hulley (Manager/Secretary); Mick Fance (Scotts); Sandy McNichol (Captain); Dean Jones (Head Greenkeeper) and Tony Finch (Chairman of Green)

The Region's thanks are extended to the host club and to Mick Fance of Scotts for the continued sponsorship.

A full field played on a windy and testing course, which had been superbly prepared by the Head Greenkeeper, Dean Jones and his staff. The hospitality provided by Flackwell Heath Golf Club and all of the staff was excellent, and even the weather relented until mid afternoon.

The format, of four man teams comprising of a greenkeeper (who is a member of BIGGA) and three golf club officials playing a Stableford with the best two scores on each hole to count, has proved a popular event over the years. Local knowledge, particularly on the greens, enabled the host club to win with 82 points. Close runners up were Welwyn Garden City Golf Club with 80 points on count back from Tilsworth Golf Club. Nearest the pin on the 3rd hole was won by Brian Allonby from Letchworth Golf Club and the longest drive on the 13th hole was David Spring from Welwyn Garden City Golf Club.

SCOTTISH NATIONAL TOURNAMENT

This year's Scottish National Tournament was something of a first. We crossed, albeit by only six miles, to Berwick-upon-Tweed (Goswick Golf Club) for our Scottish National Tournament on Thursday, June 21.

The Course Manager, George Thompson, has been a stalwart supporter of the East Section of BIGGA for many years and it is only fitting to follow the policy of the Scottish Board to move the Championships throughout the Country or, in this case, another country.

We were made most welcome at the club and with a Haar (sea mist) encroaching over the course, were slightly apprehensive about the playing conditions. However, we were assured that once the tide turned everything would be fine, and indeed this was the case.

Competitors were looking forward to playing Goswick as it has now been placed on the Regional qualifying list for the Open in 2008. The course was in fine condition, playing to its full length and with the usual breeze on a links course, provided a stern test for the competitors. Some fine scores were returned despite the difficult conditions and the eventual winner of the Championship was Kenny Stirling from Kingsbarns GC with a fine 73. The winner of the Handicap Championship was Douglas Barr from Caird Park, Dundee with 78-10=68.

Our thanks go to Captain, Brian Paton and the Board of Directors of Goswick Golf Club for allowing us the opportunity to play this fine course and to George Thompson, Course Manager and his staff who had Goswick in quite a magnificent condition. Thanks also to Ian Alsop, Secretary and Fiona Galbraith, Club Stewardess for their help in organising proceedings.



Scottish National Tournament prize winners

Prize Winners: SGGA Challenge Cup, a follows: Scratch Scottish Champion - Kenny Stirling, Kingsbarns, 73pts; Friendship Trophy. Handicap Champion - Douglas Barr, Caird Park, 68pts; Ransomes Trophy. First Class, Mark Pagan, Eyemouth, 72pts; 2. James McCormack, Kirriemuir, 74pts; 3. Stuart Greenwood, North Berwick, 75pts.

Pattison Trophy. Second Class, Robbie Murdoch, Dundas Parks, 69pts; 2. Douglas Greenshields, Eyemouth, 73pts; 3. Derek Wilson, Irvine, 75pts.

STRI Trophy. Third Class, John Wilson, Irvine, 75pts; 2. Colin Black, Blairbeth, 76pts; 3. Eddie McGee, Blairbeth, 93pts.

Dick Aitken Trophy: Best Head Greenkeeper - Archie Dunn, Auchterarder, 74(BIH); M & M Trophy: Best Assistant - Alan Russell, Archerfield, 73(BIH); SIGGA Trophy, Best Veteran - James Manuel, Goswick, 74pts.

St.Mungo Trophy, Team Trophy (Best 4 net scores) - Robbie Murdoch, Dundas Parks, 69pts; Mark Pagan, Eyemouth, 72pts; Douglas Greenshields, 73pts; Alan Russell, Archerfield, 73pts. Total: 287pts.

Patrons Trophy. Jim Smith, Rigby Taylor, 71pts; Qualifiers National Tournament; Kenny Stirling, Kingsbarns and Douglas Barr, Caird Park.

Peter J Boyd, Regional Administrator

STUDENTS END YEAR LONG JOURNEY

The first three students to graduate from the Federation of European Golf Greenkeepers' Association (FEGGA) Scholarship Programme for Golf Course Management visited Ransomes Jacobsen's Head Office and manufacturing plant in Ipswich recently at the end of their end year-long placement in Spain.

Petr Moucha from the Czech Republic, Tuukka Montinen from Finland and Elena Gonzalez Perez from Spain spent a day with the golf course machinery manufacturer prior to visiting Elmwood College to collect their diplomas following the successful completion of their educational programme.

FEGGA, in association with Polaris World and Ransomes Jacobsen, have devised the programme to provide aspiring young greenkeepers with the opportunity to gain further practical and theoretical experience, using the facilities at several of the Polaris World golf courses in Murcia.

Tuukka Montinen, speaking on behalf of all three students said, "This was tremendous opportunity and an experience that we will never forget. We are extremely grateful to Sylvain Duval, the Director of Golf at Polaris World, for his support and to Ransomes Jacobsen for their sponsorship of the lecture programme and numerous other items, which made this such a fantastic experience."



Left to right: Alan Prickett, RJ Sales Director; FEGGA students - Petr Moucha, Tuukka Montinen, Elena Gonzalez Perez, Sylvain Duval, Polaris World, Dean Cleaver, CEO of FEGGA and David Withers, RJ Managing Director

INCREDIBLE!

When 21 year old Llanwern Assistant, Rhys McDonnagh, holed-in-one in a friendly match with his fellow assistant Gary Humphries, at Newport Golf Club, eight months ago he nipped off the course before he got back to the clubhouse so he wouldn't be faced by a large bar bill.

Last month he wasn't so lucky.

Playing in a charity day at Parc Golf Club, in Newport, he repeated the feat on the 16th hole, then after a regulation par 4 at the 17th he did it again at the 18th. Two holes-in-one in the space of five shots!

"It was a team event, two scores counting and everyone was on the green at the 106 yard 16th so I decided to go straight at it with a sandwedge and it bounced once and went straight in. We went absolutely crazy," said Rhys, who has seen his handicap cut to 4.

"At the 18th the group in front had already played and said we should play too, to speed things along. Gary hit a 6-iron and was just short so I hit a 5-iron to the 175 yard hole. I didn't see it go in as there was the shadow of a tree covering the hole but apparently it bounced once and went straight in again. Gary thought it was in and dropped his back and sprinted up to the green pulled out the pin and the ball jumped out.

"I was so glad the other team was watching as they witnessed it as no-one would have believed me otherwise. I was speechless, my head all over the place," he said.

Back at the bar where he was greeted by everyone, including 20 members of Llanwern, he was overwhelmed. This time he had to put his hand in his pocket and he bought two bottles of whisky to celebrate while everyone bought him a drink.

"We won the team event and I got some balls for nearest the pin," he added.

Since then he's appeared on Radio 5 Live, in the local paper, the Sunday Mirror while Golf Punk magazine also got in touch.

"The guy from the local paper contacted a company who deal in statistics and they said the odds on it happening were 67 million to one while I will have to play for 137,842 years to repeat the feat."

And that doesn't include his other hole-in-one on the 135 yards 2nd at Newport, one he made with a 9-iron.

CUSTOMER SERVICES EXPAND

Rolawn have announced three key appointments in their Customer Services department.

Kath Atkin has been promoted to the new position of Customer Services Manager. Reporting to her are Vicky Flanagan and Kate Blake who have been promoted to the positions of Sales Office Supervisor and Customer Services Supervisor respectively.

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