



WHAT'S YOUR NUMBER?

Name: Peter Jones
Position: Principal Consultant
Company: PJA Ltd – Golf Course Consultants & Agronomists

How long have you been in the industry?

"I've been in consultancy for 14 years, but started in the golf industry about 30 years ago."

How did you get into it?

"Acting as a consultant to clubs was part of my job when I worked for a Plc golf course development company. When the company went bankrupt, I was spurred on to get my own course consultancy business going, and I bolstered my academic credentials with a MSc. degree, with the support of the Ransomes Jacobsen Scholarship scheme."

What other jobs have you done?

"I was manager of design & maintenance for the development company, I was a Course Manager for seven years, I also spent 12 years at Woburn GC. When I first started my own business I supplemented my income by landscaping peoples gardens and working part time as a liaison officer for the GTC."

What do you like about your current job?

"Giving advice, analysing problems, and the sense of team accomplishment when things work out well. I have a fascination for drainage problems (sadly). Visiting a variety of courses is also very rewarding – it's interesting to compare them at different times of the year."

What changes have you seen during your time in the industry?

"Improved mechanisation has helped to improve efficiency. The introduction of the Verti-drain type aerators has had a huge impact on golf courses, and now there are better top dressers, precision scarifiers, etc, which all do the job more efficiently. Staff welfare and Health & Safety has also improved tremendously."

What do you like to do in your spare time?

"Our twin boys keep my wife and I busy at weekends driving them to mountain biking competitions. When time allows you will find me at peace with the world in my garage with an angle grinder and spanners building a replica Jag SS100."

Where do you see yourself in 10 years time?

"In my garage, still working on the car."

Who do you consider to be your best friends in the industry?

"This is a great industry for meeting people and making friends. There are probably too many to mention, but I would like to mention Andy Cole for his encouragement when I started out in business."

What do you consider to be your lucky number?

"6."

Pick a number

"42."



Peter has picked Victor Jamieson from Rainbird



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MORE EFFECTIVE OVERSEEDING

Miranda Harris offers some help when it comes to making overseeding decisions

Greenkeepers are under pressure from all sides; players who want to play all year round on fast greens and perfect tees; unpredictable and at times extreme climate; not forgetting the restricted use of water and chemicals as sustainable, ecological considerations become more relevant. Therefore practical management systems like overseeding, where new grass is introduced into the sward from seed could be a long term investment for any golf course.

Overseeding not only replaces grasses which are not renewed by natural regeneration, but offers the opportunity to introduce high performance grasses into the sward. The latest genetic improvements can be included which take advantage of the huge investment in research and development. Overseeding helps to maintain a diverse and balanced sward, reducing the invasion of unwanted grasses and weeds.

As the use of nitrogen, water and chemical inputs becomes more of an issue, overseeding can offer a sustainable management solution resulting in improved disease resistance as well as drought resistance and less need for fertiliser and chemical inputs.

The definition of sustainability in relation to golf course development and management, as stated by the R & A is, "optimising the playing quality of the golf course in harmony with the conservation of its natural environment under economically sound and socially responsible management". Overseeding definitely fits the bill.

Overseeding as part of renovation

Trials carried out by STRI in 2005 demonstrated that overseeding is an important part of any renovation programme in order to aid recovery after wear. The trials showed that the unseeded control failed to reach acceptable standards compared to the various treatments which had been overseeded. Interestingly enough, overall variation among seed rates (which varied from 12.5gm² - 100gm²) was markedly less than the difference observed between the overseeding treatments and the unseeded control.

How often

How often one should overseed depends on where. The optimum for fairways is annually but every 3 years is the absolute minimum, totalling 6 holes every year. Tees would be as soon as the tee master has been removed, whereas greens need to be oversewn at least in the spring and autumn but ideally every month through the growing season. Remember that poa will seed daily between March and September and overseeding will reduce invasion of these unwanted grasses.

Overseeding Fairways

With much time and effort spent on the tees and greens, overseeding fairways can be overlooked and left to recover from wear and tear unaided. However with careful selection of effective grass seed mixtures and remedial

work, fairways will improve in the short term and exhibit greater resilience in future years.

The species choice must be matched with the character of the course and the practicality of successful establishment. The timing of the seeding operation and the method of application will have huge bearing on the outcome.

The backbone of most fairway mixtures utilises the fine fescue range including strong creeping red fescue, slender creeping red fescue and chewings fescue. Combinations of the latter two fescue establish rapidly compared to bent grass. This is primarily because of their larger seed size. Strong creeping red fescue tends to establish the fastest and produces rhizomes. Therefore it is useful in providing initial establishment and consolidating new areas while slower establishing grasses develop. If mowing heights are very close (below 10mm) then strong creeping red fescue will tend to lose ground cover.

Chewings fescue and slender creeping red fescue provide fineness of leaf and high shoot density. Slender creeping red fescue provides some resilience with rhizomatous growth and is quite drought tolerant.

A species worthy of consideration in freer draining low nutrient soils is sheep's fescue. The new turf type cultivars can withstand very close mowing and retain a deep green colour throughout the seasons, as well as being fine leaved. See picture of Quatro, sheep's fescue (below.)



Smooth stalked meadow grass is often included in fairway mixtures for wear tolerance even in close mown turf. It is important to recognise the limitations of smooth stalked meadow grass, unless the seed has been primed, as it will require relatively high ground temperatures to establish. It is also more suited to freer draining soils.

Bent grasses are useful in providing a dense base to the sward. The establishment of bent as with the smooth stalked meadow grasses can be slow and unpredictable due to their small seed size, requiring relatively high soil temperatures to germinate. The finer leaved bents will offer better disease resistance.

Overseeding Greens

As with fairways, the choice of species for overseeding greens is very wide with the final decision depending largely on the characteristics of the root zone and the environmental pressures both natural and imposed.

Many older greens are predominantly populated by bent grass and annual meadow grass. Recently constructed courses may have combinations of fescue and bent with small amounts of annual meadow grass. Finally we have the few courses with fescue dominated greens.

The characteristics of a green will to a large degree dictate the success or failure of establishing new grasses. Poor drainage, very low cutting heights and heavy use will not favour the latter. It is very important to recognise the need to improve the conditions within a green if seeding is to be successful. It is also important to recognise limitations of grasses within a green if very low cutting heights are imposed.

Once again the fine fescue range offer tremendous advantages; as well as high shoot density, they have low input requirements and relatively consistent growth patterns. They do not fair well in wet, heavier greens or under very low mowing heights (below 4mm). Fescues also benefit from less surface disturbance and regular light top dressings.

Traditional mixtures usually comprise fescue and bent in combination. It is fair to say that more greenkeepers are using pure bent and pure fescue mixtures for overseeding. Thanks to a growing environmental awareness and the R & A's vision of sustainable golf, interest in using red fescue for greens has increased significantly.

Overseeding Tees

Tees mixtures vary dramatically and choosing mixtures can be daunting. The choice of actual species and varieties will be heavily influenced by the tee usage and maintenance inputs.

Many courses now use modern fine leaved amenity ryegrasses simply to achieve quick establishment and high wear tolerance. Typically it is favoured in inland parkland courses.

The use of ryegrass however comes with the added burden of higher fertiliser input and increased mowing frequencies. The decision will depend on the existing sward composition and the tees usage.

As discussed earlier, chewings fescue and slender creeping red fescue provide high shoot density, require low fertiliser input and reduce mowing frequencies. Strong creeping red fescue provides relatively quick establishment and extensive rhizomatous growth. Bent grass forms a good base to the sward and can spread by rhizomes or stolons.

Smooth stalked meadow grass is very wear tolerant at low mowing heights and provides a good network of rhizomes. It also recovers well from wear damage. The main disadvantage of this species is slow germination and maturation time. As mentioned before, the introduction of primed seed may go some way to alleviate this.

How to overseed

As part of the preparation for overseeding it is necessary to create gaps in the existing sward to give seedlings a chance to compete and ensure the seed is in contact with the rootzone. This can be achieved through verticutting,



scarifying or aeration, or may form part of the role of the equipment chosen for the actual task of introducing the seed. Larger areas such as fairways may require a direct drill approach as seen at The Royal Lytham Golf Club (see photo). If carrying out small repairs such as divoting ensure seed is not incorporated too deeply and that sufficient moisture is available. Specialist greens seeders are now available with high accuracy of sowing depth and application rates.

Seed can be applied to the greens during regular coring work as long as the seed is brushed into the cores in the final dressing. This has the added benefit of providing a good depth of root zone below the seed. Surface scarification and top dressing can be utilised applying the seed within the top dressing.

For best results, overseed in good growing weather and relax operations which are likely to cause stress to emerging seedlings, e.g. top dressing, verticutting or close mowing. Overseeding to improve turf quality may well require the implementation of a programme of treatments. It will also be necessary to adapt the maintenance regime to suit the sown species, should this differ from that implemented to the original sward.

Whatever choice you make it is very important to recognise the maintenance requirements of these grasses and choose highly rated seed varieties if overseeding is to be successful.

Remember, this is a long term investment with both financial and environmental benefits.

For further information about overseeding and the choice of varieties from DLF Trifolium Ltd, please see www.dlf.co.uk/amenityseed/johnsonssportseed

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Miranda Harris is Marketing and Communications Manager for DLF Trifolium with technical support from John Hughes, Amenity Technical Manager.



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SURVIVE THE DOWNTURN

Robert Clive talks with Scott MacCallum about how golf clubs can survive the recession

Golf, indeed the world, is going through some tough times. The recession is biting, our houses are probably worth less than they were a few months ago and our pension could be compared to a ball bounced around on a roulette wheel. In golf, where there were once waiting lists there are now places available immediately and often without a joining fee – it's a buyers market. Indeed why join a club? Golfers can pick and choose where they play and by using the various 'two for one' schemes, which can include breakfast, lunch, free sleeve of balls, or buggy etc etc, it doesn't eat into the pay packet too much.

As sure as night follows day this affects revenue streams at clubs and the knock-on of it all can only be detrimental. How then can clubs best protect themselves against the economic downturn and ensure they are well placed to take advantage when the good times roll round again?

Surrey-based 360 Golf specialises in the business of golf and one of the services the company offers is a "business health check". This is a private, independent audit of the club's business performance and can range from just reviewing financial performance, through to more specifics like membership sales, marketing, budgeting, management structure, personnel training and sourcing. Most instructions of 360 Golf are made by clubs with a view to improve efficiency and service ultimately to maximise profit and minimise loss. The company also works with proprietors to develop golf facilities from scratch in UK, Europe and further a field – current and recent projects for 360 Golf include a new project in Morocco, feasibility work in Grenada, a major development in India and the construction of a new Peter McEvoy designed "play-golf" course in East Kilbride is near completion.

"My take on it is that we are definitely in a recession and I'm sure there are going to be some casualties," said Joint Managing Director, Robert Clive.

Robert believes that the struggling courses will need to evolve and be more imaginative or some will end up in receivership/administration, or worst still, cease to operate. With agricultural prices and yields per acre going up steadily at the moment, it could be argued that from a pure business perspective, a few loss making courses would be worth more as "sites" and produce better returns if returned to farmland rather than remain as a golf course – a complete turn around from the '80s and early 90s when so much farm land was turned into golf courses.

"There is no escaping the fact that there is too much supply. Too many golf courses in some areas all chasing the same business – a far cry from the heady days when golfers were queuing up at clubs and absolutely delighted to be able to give you money for a green fee or to become a member. Now all the power is in the hands of the golfer," said Robert.

"Although there will be some casualties, I think the golf market place will stabilise in the medium to long term and those clubs which come through it, will be stronger better businesses for the experience," he added.

"However, management, opinions and attitudes need to change; those that survive for the long term will have to set creative and imaginative policies to win business from competitors".



This economic uncertainty has also affected the new build market place for golf. Robert says that there are no identifiable reasons why a stand alone golf facility would justify be conceived and funded in the UK today.

"Nowadays virtually every new golf development we see is tied into a resort or housing development. In this country, if a house has a golf course view there is a minimum 30% premium on the price, in some parts of the world it's 100% so it's easy to understand what the drivers are for new golf course are!"

Robert also feels that there will be a good number of courses being sold in the UK over next few years for the usual variety of reasons but with more pressure being "exercised" by the owners bank/financiers.

"Banks are nervous and want some of their money back from the market place. If golf continues to suffer and the Bank has concerns over the management of the facility and therefore their debt, then it is inevitable some sales will be forced".

"At 360 Golf, we are receiving more enquiries from Banks this year looking for us to carry out audits on golf customers' performance. Although this is good business for 360 Golf, we would much prefer to be working with the owner or committees before the Bank take charge of the situation".

So what is Robert seeing when he looks out on the British golf market?

"Some clubs are open and honest about the problems they have, albeit because their Banks are telling them they have no choice but to face up to the facts, but there are others who are sticking their heads in the sand and hoping that the problems will just go away – these are the ones who are at greatest risk."

“It is not right to generalise, but loosely, proprietary clubs tend to have a little more business savvy because they have commercial ambitions, while traditional members clubs have relied too much on financial reserves to get them through, perhaps bequeathed to the club by a grateful ex-member or built up over years of joining fee income. Traditional members clubs are not finding these reserves reliable today and get found out as soon as something like the roof needs to be repaired.”

One of the problems that Robert comes across is the ineffectiveness of the conventional club committee structure.

“When things are tough it is vital to make brave and quick decisions and turn these into actions. In our experience, this often doesn’t happen given the set up of a club committee”.

“A club’s biggest dilemma is the conflict between the members being used to paying low annual subscriptions with limited numbers of visitors or societies and the challenge of making the books balance. This becomes nigh on impossible when there ceases to be a waiting list,” said Robert, painting a picture many will recognise.

“Until recently the normal churn of members wasn’t a huge issue as if 40 left the club they would be replaced by 40 new members who would each pay their joining fee in addition to replacing the annual subs paid by the departed members.

“The joining fee would often become part of the annual capital expenditure budget for the following year. But if you have 40 leaving and, say, 20 coming in you are now 20 joining fees down, 20 subs down as well as the lost expenditure at the bar. Suddenly it gets into a spiral.”

Another common failing for members clubs is not being realistic and therefore honest about a waiting list.

“We come across many clubs that say they’ve got a five year waiting list, which sounds great until you actually analysis it. Are people prepared to wait five years for membership? The answer is almost always no because there are now other clubs within easy range which people can join in the same day. We ask how recent the people on the list have been contacted. I often suggest writing to them all to confirm that they still want a place. You usually find the response is people are not prepared to wait that long and many of them have forgotten they were even on the list and have joined another club.”

Although solutions to financial concerns will vary from club to club, Robert offered some insight into how 360 Golf improves the financial performance of a facility, by identifying one key element of an overall strategy - that is to make the golf course work harder in filling the tee times which are not generally used by the membership.

“The senior roll up on a Monday might see the course busy in the early morning and then utterly empty by the afternoon while the old boys are having their cup of tea in the clubhouse. Everyone knows no-one will be going out in the afternoon and those tee times could be marketed to generate much needed additional revenues.”

Robert is also adamant that golf clubs that go down the “Slash and burn budget cutting route” are on the wrong track. Overstaffing is a mistake for obvious reasons but so is the opposite, when times get tough a well motivated, efficient greenkeeping team is essential.

“Your biggest asset is your golf course so arguably your most important employee is the guy who keeps it in good shape. If you let your best asset deteriorate so does the club’s reputation and appeal. Then you really are in trouble.”

“My take on it is that if you compromise on quality then you put the entire business at risk. However, you must look at the budgets of each department to make sure that the money is being spent as wisely as possible. When things get tight all staff and kit need to work even harder to get through it, “A Course Manager needs to be flexible. For example, he may be a real advocate of one make of machinery - ‘I’ve always been an “X” man’ or ‘I only use “X” and no other make will do.’ That’s not true. It may be the best piece of kit but it’s not correct to say it’s the only piece of kit. Sourcing from another company may ensure that you actually get a new fairway mower as opposed to being asked to keep the existing one going for another year because you were insisting on the more expensive, favourite brand.”

Another area where money can be made to work harder is in service agreements.

“When a service or leasing agreement runs out it’s amazing how many people immediately throw the machine away and get a new one. However, if well maintained, many machines can go on providing great value for many more years,” said Robert, who recommends that even clubs with a relatively small staff should retain a mechanic, even if he doubles up as a greenkeeper.

So the message is to examine your budgets, rather than slashing them and never compromise on quality.



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Count on it.

SAD NEWS

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Kelvin Sansum, Head Greenkeeper of Newton Green Golf Club. Kelvin fought a long battle with illness over the years, but continued to work whenever possible at the club, for whom he worked for 22 years. His commitment to his family and popularity in the area was expressed by those who packed the church, with many left outside for his funeral service at St Andrews Great Cornard. Our thoughts are with his wife Caroline, and his two daughters, Carlene and Danielle. He will be greatly missed.

Colin R Rushbrook
President of East Anglian Section

SPORTS RELIEF

To everybody who sponsored me for the sports relief mile, a huge thank you. I set out with the aim of raising £100 and finished with a total of £1,085. Thanks to all of you which once again proves what a great industry we work in. Included in that total was an anonymous donation of £75 from either a group of people or an individual?

To check out everyone who sponsored me you can go to: www.mysportrelief.com/personalPage. The registrationID is 93236. The donations credited to myself came from you technophobes who promised me cash which I did on my card so for those who haven't paid me yet, I shall me round looking for the money!

You will be pleased to know that I ran the three miles in 24 minutes and due to my rigorous training regime (restricting myself to one glass of red wine on Saturday night) I felt fairly good so I ran a 4th mile and finished in 32 minutes and it only took me twice as long as that to recover. I was also fortunate that I had some good companions to encourage me along.

The person who gave me the idea was Steve Isaac so I don't know if I will ever speak to him again.

Thanks again

Gordon



THANK YOU

When I was put forward to be considered as Toro student greenkeeper of the year by my tutor, Andy Wight, I was thrilled that my work had been recognised and felt honoured. I dreamt of going to America as I sat at the kitchen table writing my initial entry, never expecting to even come close to the finals.

The opportunity to be interviewed and to discuss greenkeeping at both the regional and national finals was a great experience. All the other greenkeepers I have met during this process are great representatives for the industry and I wish them all the best in their future careers. The weekend of the national final was a lot of fun as I was able to spend time discussing other peoples courses and sharing new ideas over a drink or two. I was greatly impressed by the knowledge and passion shown by all the finalists especially those who had only spent a few years in the industry.

I cannot begin to explain my thrill at being nominated as Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year. Attending the Winter school for turf managers at the University of Massachusetts was a once in a life time opportunity and enabled me to build on my experience and skills as well as network with greenkeepers from around the world, I would highly recommend the course to anybody interested in learning more about turf management. The trade show in Florida opened my eyes to the new technology available to me in my work and introduced me to some interesting new concepts. I was warmly welcomed at the Toro Headquarters in Minneapolis and the factories in Tomah and Chicopee, the work that goes into developing and producing state of the art greenkeeping equipment is very impressive, I was able to see the process from start to finish.

I would like to thank Lely, Toro and BIGGA for this amazing opportunity to represent British Student greenkeepers and for recognising the importance of education as part of greenkeeping. I am lucky to have had the ongoing support of Andy Wight, an exceptional tutor. I would also like to thank Luton Hoo for supporting me in this venture. Last but not least I would like to thank my family and wife Barbara for encouraging me to do my best and for never complaining about the time away from home even though our first child Charles was only four weeks old when I left for America.

I wish the best of luck to this year's nominees, enjoy every moment!

Avon Bridges
Head Greenkeeper
Luton Hoo

Please email your letters to Scott MacCallum, scott@bigga.co.uk
or Melissa Jones, melissa@bigga.co.uk
or post to: BIGGA House, Aldwark Manor, Aine, York YO61 1UF

SEVEN DEADLY SUNS

Rates of melanoma, the most dangerous form of skin cancer have increased by 43% in the last 25 years making it the fastest rising cancer in Britain. A British Skin survey has revealed that over a third of British men and women are unsure of what an SPF is. People are also confused about the difference between UVA and UVB rays, with three-quarters of those questioned attributing UVA rays to burning and 77% UVB rays to ageing.

So what are the common myths about the sun and sunbathing?

1. MYTH: I sit in the safety of the shade, never in direct sunlight so don't need to use sun protection.

FACT: The damaging UV rays from the sun are reflected from sand, sea, snow, water and other surfaces and so sun damage can occur while you are sitting in the shade.

Regardless of whether you are in the shade or fully exposed to the sun's rays, you must take sun protection seriously and use an SPF 30 or above. The SPF refers to the relative protection against sunburn that you will receive from a product compared to not applying it. So sunscreens with a higher SPF offer more protection. However, SPF only refers to protection against UVB rays (burning) and it is the UVA exposure which is increasingly linked to long term sun damage and skin cancer.

When it comes to applying sun cream, it should be applied 30 minutes before exposure to the sun, re-applied every two hours and immediately after swimming or vigorous exercise. Remember to apply sun cream after towelling as this will almost certainly remove most of the traces of existing sun cream. It is also recommended to apply sunscreen liberally, using approximately three tablespoons for an average sized adult.

2. MYTH: Water resistant products protect me while I am in the water and I don't need to re-apply them when I sunbathe.

FACT: Water resistant products do afford protection in the water, but you need to take care. Depending on how long you are in the water and what activities you may do, the sun cream may be totally or partially lost; it almost certainly will be removed when you towel yourself dry. The only safe advice is to regularly re-apply the sun cream, especially after towelling.

Many people do not realize how much sun damage they are getting when they are in, or near, the water. This is because the cooling effect of the water lessens the warning usually caused by the sun's heat, but does not reduce the light incident on the skin.

Equally, many parents paddle in the water while safe-guarding their children and do not think about protecting themselves from the incident and reflected light they are exposed to.

Always ensure that you use a water resistant SPF 30 or above and remember to re-apply it straight after swimming. Taking extra care with children is vital and make sure they wear T-shirts for extra protection while swimming.

3. MYTH: My skin never burns so I won't get any long term skin damage.

FACT: It is the total lifetime exposure to the sun's rays that is proportional to the risk of a skin cancer occurring, not necessarily episodes of sunburn, although these will heighten the risk. All exposure to the sun will add to the overall risk of a cancer occurring. Even if exposure to the sun doesn't manifest itself as sunburn, exposure to damaging UVA increases your risk of long-term skin damage.

Research shows that unprotected sun exposure in the first 15 years of a child's life significantly increases the risk of skin cancer later.

It is true the extra pigment in darker skin does afford some added protection against the sun's harmful UV rays and that the skin is slightly less susceptible to burning.

4. MYTH: I do not need to use a sunscreen when the weather is cooler.

FACT: When it is cool but bright, there are still lots of UV rays so sun protection all year round is a must.

Even in relatively sun-free countries like Britain, it can take as little as half an hour to get sunburn, posing a serious threat to your health in the long term.

It is also important to remember that sun exposure that does not result in burning can still cause damage to the skin cells and increase your risk of developing skin cancer.

Research indicates 200 new cases of skin cancer are diagnosed every day in the UK, and melanoma is rising faster than any other type of deadly cancer. Don't assume because you live in a cooler climate there is little risk of sun damage. Skin damage can occur even from exposure on cloudy, rainy or overcast days.

5. MYTH: Sunscreens with a high SPF prevent damage from the sun's rays.

FACT: The higher the SPF number the more protection there is from burning caused by UVB radiation.

While sunburn is mainly caused by UVB rays, research now shows UVA rays may be just as, if not more, important in causing premature skin ageing and skin cancer.

Although broad-spectrum sunscreens give protection against both, product labelling can be misleading with the product possibly offering very low UVA protection.

The UVA Star Rating System gives a good indication of the quality of protection against UVA rays, with one star being a low level of protection and five-stars being the highest level of UVA protection you can get and this is better than those products making the new 'broad spectrum protection' claim, while not stating their actual UVA protection level.