

Part one - The front nine

1. Ambition

Without this you cannot begin your journey so, if you haven't already, get some!

How do you become ambitious? Well it may be something that was sparked during your childhood or teenage years or you acquired throughout your career. Ambition can be gained out of either a positive or a negative situation. For example, you may have enjoyed playing golf and wanted to make a career out of it.

Alternatively you may not have achieved at school and, as a late developer, have now discovered your niche.

This was certainly my experience when, aged sixteen, my dad read out a job description for Apprentice Greenkeeper in the local paper and said "do this job, then build me a golf course". So by all means be as ambitious as you like, but don't let ambition dictate your pace, and don't ram that ambition down people's throats.

2. Support

You are not going to make it on your own, you are going to need the support of your family, friends, peers, colleagues, educators and employers, to name an important few.

Let people you trust know of your career plans and they will help you with advice, experience, knowledge and introductions. You will also need their support when you up sticks and move to the next role along your career path.

3. Learning

Before you can take that first step to being the boss there are a large number of course maintenance related topics that you will have to obtain a good understanding of.

This knowledge will be learnt by practical 'on-the-job' application, formal college education, and your continued professional development through BIGGA and other management workshops and courses.

The great news is that learning has never been so in depth, available and accessible to greenkeepers. You should be aiming for a well-rounded knowledge of the many practical and technical aspects of the role. But, for all your advance preparation you will gain the most learning once you have obtained your first Course Manager position.

4. Communication

I could easily have listed this as step 1, as you have to start sharing what you want to achieve straight away. We do not all start out as good communicators; indeed many of us enter greenkeeping because we don't want to spend all day communicating. We are not natural sales people or marketers, it is something we develop as we grow in our professional lives. In my experience all the awkward, difficult and stressful situations I have found myself in have been caused by miscommunication or non-communication. Remember that good communicators are 'influencers', your main aim as a manager will be to bring your influence to the decision making process and ultimately a satisfactory end result. Some may call this getting your own way but it's better to get your own way than get in the way! Just be aware of your 'two-way' communication skill levels and make sure you improve both enough so that your message is clearly received and understood without harm or offence.

Successful influencers have a strong vision that they support with measurable, achievable delivery targets that form the basis for well-constructed business/operational plans. So do you see yourself as an influencer? If not, you will have to be content with being a passive doer.

5. Golf Skills

This may surprise a few but in my opinion you must be able to play the game to a handicap. Do you think you are going to persuade your employers of your aims for their playing surfaces and course set-up if you don't understand the skills and nuances of the game? So if you don't play get some lessons and get out there now, or be prepared to be behind the gain line at interview, if you are lucky enough to get one!

6. Career Path

You may think that this should be listed earlier in these steps. There are (I hope) young greenkeepers out there who already have their hearts (and heads) set on running a championship course. It may be your plan is to stay at your first course and devote your entire working life to its success, or you may be on the first rung to St Wentingdale G&CC. I don't believe you can truly set your course management career path in place until you make that first



step into the role. Ambition and your career path are closely linked, however do not allow ambition to dominate your career direction totally.

Aged 26 I had ambitions to become the Links Superintendent on an Open Championship course, to ensure I gained the necessary skills and contacts I made my career moves in line with this aim.

At 29 I got distracted by a role that proved to me that all that glitters is not gold so mid-career moved into golf course construction and design, and then into club management.

So your career climb needs to be flexible because there are many branches to this particular tree. Things change in a career, you, employers, family and general life, so make sure you have a flexible path that still satisfies you and don't let that path run into a dead end.

7. Organisational Skills

These are vital, as simple as that. I presume you are reading this because you are already on a career path, maybe you are already a First Assistant or Deputy supervising a team. If so it is most likely that you are doing this because it has been recognised that you are organised.

So keep going, stay organised and plan, use day-to-day organ-

isational tools such as diaries and project notebooks, as well as learning IT software packages and mobile technology skills that help you plan, record and report.

8. Course Policy

Now we are getting into the nitty gritty of the job role. This is one of the subjects that all the Deputies on our workshop want to know about and get their hands on.

This document encapsulates the golf course manager's role and more or less writes their job description/specification.

To make the move up you should know what is in a golf course management policy document, if you don't get your Course Manager to show you one. When you have read it ask lots of questions about how it's formed and why it's there.

They should be telling you its main purpose is to identify the strategy needed to achieve the quality objectives set out in the club/business mission statement, and then identify the processes needed to achieve these aims.

Your golf course management policy document should be the foundation on which the management of your course is built.

If your course doesn't have one then ask around or look at the Model Document in the Member Resources section of the BIGGA website.

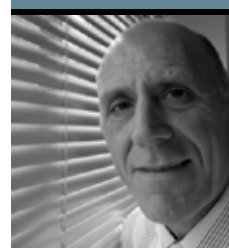
Kevin and Peter hosting their 'So You Want To Be a Golf Course Manager' workshop at Continue to Learn 2013

9. Resource Management

If these 18 steps were golf holes this would be stroke index 1. This one topic covers everything a manager is ever asked to control. Manpower, machinery and materials all require the fourth 'M' - money. Get this right and you will succeed as a Course Manager. Contained within the four 'Ms' your operational management will include health and safety, environmental management, power, water, irrigation and, in case you forget, the provision of a golf course that provides customer satisfaction. To control the delivery of these resource elements within the constraints of the fourth requires good management skills above all else. Of course you have to know when and why you are applying all of this resource, but if you don't have the structure, systems and controls in place your agronomic knowledge and skill will be rendered useless, and you will be neither efficient or attain your objectives.

Now you have walked the first nine of the Course Management Career Planner take some time out at the halfway hut to work out whether you are under or over par. Then note what you are going to do to improve on your front nine and be ready to take on the all important career back nine in next month's issue.

about the author



Kevin Munt

Kevin Munt is Principle Consultant at KMgc. Forty years ago he started his greenkeeping career during which time has been the Course Manager at the Hankley Common, Royal Dornoch and Wentworth Golf Clubs. Kevin has also project managed golf course constructions and been Operations Manager Buckinghamshire Golf Club

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Conservation

Dan McGrath MG recently won Conservation Greenkeeper of the Year, a coveted STRI Environment Award. BIGGA are part of this and Greenkeeper International is a media partner, so Dan agreed to tell us about his prize – a trip to Portugal to explore how they're dealing with environmental challenges on the Iberian Peninsula



2012 Golf Environment Awards, supported by BIGGA



Following my appointment as Course Manager at North Foreland Golf Club on the Kent coastline seven years ago, many challenges confronted me. A truly spectacular chalkland cliff top course built on the ethos of traditional golf needed tweaking in several work programmes - one being the ecology and environmental work.

First thing was to draw up an environmental policy and plan, without which there is no direction. This was completed and the wheels were then well and truly in motion. I was introduced to the Kent Wildlife Trust by a previous employer, so the next logical step was to make North Foreland a corporate member. Having the expertise and local

knowledge of such an organisation is invaluable and one I would recommend to anyone wishing to pursue any environmental project.

The main concentration of the first phase of the work was the Chalkland Regeneration Programme. Large areas had previously been unmanaged and seen as out of play areas. Scrub had taken a foothold, completely smothering the native chalkland grasses and also allowing ground ivy to populate the site. A programme of scarification on a rotational basis commenced and is still carried out to this day. The results have been immense. Native grasses have returned, orchids have appeared with numbers growing every year, the rough is thin and wispy giving fantastic definition and improv-

goes European

ing overall playability. This work accompanied by the construction of a reservoir and bore hole plus over 70 bird boxes, two owl boxes, log piles, recycling units and more have led us to where we are today.

It was a great honour to accept Conservation Greenkeeper of the Year on behalf of all my team during BTME. The Award is a result of programmes put in place in 2005 and followed through by some fantastically motivated, skilled members of the team.

Once we felt that we were starting to win the battle on invasive vegetation and the site's natural characteristics were flourishing we felt it time to enter into The Golf Environmental Awards. I saw it as a great way to showcase the hard work the team had put in.

The first stage was completing the application form and then sending it to ecologists Richard Stuttard and Bob Taylor.

To everyone's delight within the club we were chosen for a site visit. Notice I say visit rather than 'inspection'. I feel that many may be put off by experts visiting and judging one's practices, however you couldn't be further from the truth. Richard and Bob are two of the most realistic and understanding ecologists out there and fully appreciate the obstacles that us turf managers have to confront every day. They not only have an unbelievable passion for flora and fauna, but they are also very sincere when they say that golf courses are one of the most valuable habitats left in society today for many endangered species.

I am no eco-warrior and anyone that knows me would say I'm just a normal everyday turf manager and the STRI appreciate this in every way.

The most important thing to recognise is that we are turf managers - but more so we are all land managers.

It really does not matter whether you have a championship course or a nine hole course, the decisions are made on the work done with the resources available. This is one of many refreshing aspects of the Award and believe me there are many highlights throughout the whole process. The phone call from Richard giving me the good news was one of the highlights of my career to date. On receiving the plaque during BTME, we were informed of the date for our prize Environmental trip to Portugal.

I was to be accompanied by Ian Willett from Thorpeness Golf Club who won the Overall Award.



The trip couldn't have been timed any better as I was looking forward to swapping the unforgiving easterly winds in Kent for a little Iberian heat. Bob, Ian and myself all met up in Faro in the Algarve and were later joined by Alexandra Almeida, Sustainability Advisor to the Portuguese Golf Federation.

Onyria Palmares Golf Resort

Onyria Palmares Golf Resort was the first stop where we were greeted by Course Superintendent Joel Nunes. This recently redesigned Robert Trent Jones Jnr 27 hole complex showed us the scale of the environmental challenges faced in such a location. Like all Portuguese clubs, struggles with the scarcity of water gave us a great example of how both drainage and





“The most important thing to recognise is that we are turf managers - but more so we are all land managers”



lake design can be incorporated to serve multiple ends. Wetland areas were integrated with the drainage system and new lakes designed to increase holding capacity. Recycling of all hollow cores had also seen the recent construction of a chipping green which will be open in time for the main playing season. It was a pleasure to share ideas with Joel and his professionalism and hospitality was greatly appreciated by all.

Amendoeira Golf Resort

From there we moved onto the Faldo & O'Connor Courses in the Amendoeira Golf Resort. Located on the western Algarve, this 36 hole complex was largely built on a flood plain. Russ Wilson, Course Superintendent, explained the challenges and work carried out to reduce the frequency and severity of flooding.



San Lorenzo

Serious engineering solutions were required and employed with the stream bed being widened and redesigned with meanders added, to slow the water flow rate. The new stream accompanied by retention basins, lakes and integrated drainage has allowed them to produce two championship courses.

It has been widely recognised that the work carried out is not just from a golfing viewpoint but for the local area and residents. Villages have seen the flooding risk to their homes greatly reduced thanks to the work. It is very rare for a golf course today to actually reduce water usage and not impact more on the natural resources.

San Lorenzo

Day two saw us head to the exclusive resort of San Lorenzo – which has a joining fee of €60,000. Welcomed on site by a truly remarkable Director of Golf, Antonio Santos, nothing could have prepared us for the day that lay ahead. A stimulating tour around the course proved to us that this was justifiably awarded Golf Resort of the Year 2009 for Europe. One of the premier clubs from the 90 in the country, Antonio explained that a major issue environmentally is the residents living close to every hole. Large exclusive houses with gardens to match have seen many exotic plant species finding their way onto the course from the resident grounds.

These have increasingly become more invasive and the natural veg-

etation characteristic was starting to be lost.

San Lorenzo are now addressing these issues and have in their team a very knowledgeable greenkeeper/ environmentalist to make sure all codes of practice are followed. Large stretches of the course run along the protected area of the Ria Formosa, a wetland area of true beauty. The team are working hard to eradicate any foreign plants and produce a haven for all wildlife. To say that they are succeeding is an understatement. The bird life and plant species on show are unbelievable and the course is a shining example of how both nature and the game of golf can go hand in hand.

I could go on and on about our experiences from first entering this competition to the Portugal trip, but hopefully I have given you all a positive insight to a truly rewarding process. Please put yourselves forward for this award as all parties win, you the individual, your team, your membership, the golfing industry and the fragile flora and fauna we share this planet with.

I would like to sign off by thanking my travelling companions for making the trip one to remember and to all the sponsors without whom this would not be possible – STRI, BIGGA, County Turf, Golf Monthly, Ransomes Jacobsen, Syngenta, Greenkeeping magazine and this year's addition Farmura. Lastly, can I pay a special thanks to my team at North Foreland for their continued support and incredible work output.



ABOVE: San Lorenzo Director of Golf Antonio Santos
LEFT: Telephone masts disguised as trees at San Lorenzo

2012 Golf Environment Awards sponsors



Bob Taylor, Head of Ecology and Environment at the STRI, said: "It seems a bit of a cliché to say that the study trip provided through the Golf Environment Awards is a life changing experience but it is true. I am sure that Ian and Dan will never forget their experience to the Algarve and particularly the visit to San Lorenzo. The passion, knowledge and enthusiasm from the Director of Golf there was superb. Antonio Santos gave over five hours of his precious time; showing the group the World heritage site – The Ria Formosa - adjoining the course. His passion was infectious and perfectly aligned to the aspirations of our more informed greenkeepers. A wonderful trip."



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Where are you going with irrigation?



Sport in the UK is predominantly played on turf and it is the overall quality of that surface which dictates the excellence of play. There are several factors which help to control sward quality including grass species, maintenance practices and irrigation; and it is perhaps the latter which is least understood.

Unlike agriculture, sports turf managers do not require their turf to produce a commercial yield, they

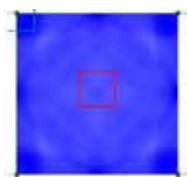
require a balanced growth, sufficient only to maintain the quality of the playing surface, and of course it's the quality of that playing surface which keeps the punters clamouring to become members, or seek out your facility as a visitor.

The past few years have provided the UK with about as many varied rainfall scenarios as there is possible to be. The autumn of 2012 was the wettest on record and we had an extremely cold spring this year. Cold winds have scoured the turf for available water leaving us

with bleached droughty conditions. But are we heading for a hot dry summer, and are you prepared?

Whatever your views on global warming weather patterns are certainly changing. Even in areas of the country where average rainfall figures suggest there has been little significant change in the past ten years, the pattern of precipitation has changed.

Moderate precipitation over a sustained period has often been replaced with shorter but heavier downpours, resulting in an even



Densograms above (good) and below (bad) coverage

