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# **Velsicol**

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Dear Ray:

Upon my return from Scotland, I was pleased to have the May issue of **The Bull Sheet** waiting for me and the warm welcome mentioned in your first paragraph under "Midwest Breezes". You also mentioned several changes in the staff of the USGA Green Section. With the resignation of Lee Record and Holman Griffin from the Green Section, the following changes have resulted. Billy Buchanan now becomes the Mid-Atlantic Director and returns to his native state of Virginia. Billy is a graduate of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and has been with the Green Section since 1970. Stanley Zontek has been appointed Director of the Northeast Region. Stan is a graduate of Pennsylvania State University and has been with the Green Section for the past four years as the Eastern Agronomist. Stan spent his childhood and following years working on golf courses in Pennsylvania, where his father has been the Superintendent. Two new agronomists have been added to the Green Section staff. They are William S. Brewer, Jr. and James T. Snow. Both hold advanced degrees in Turfgrass Management from Cornell and have worked on golf courses in the New York area. In addition to the excellent academic background that Mr. Brewer and Mr. Snow possess, the work experience they have accumulated at Winged Foot, Century Country Club and others, make them valuable additions to the Green Section staff.

You also mentioned, "Hopefully, these changes will lead to the betterment of communications with superintendents and ultimately better turf for golf". It is my honest and sincere desire to continue working with the superintendents in the Chicagoland area in whatever way I may be of assistance. Prior to joining the Green Section in June of 1971, my work experience on a golf course was under the guidance and direction of Ted Woehrle at Oakland Hills, who had spent many years in the Chicago area. As a result of working with Ted for several years, I feel close to and identify with many of the problems faced by the superintendents in the Chicago area. As you mentioned, I also hope that these changes will lead to the betterment of communications and relationships with superintendents, ultimately having better turf for better golf.

At one of the earlier superintendent meetings this year, I promised to drop you a brief note concerning my trip to Scotland and the home of golf. Instead of writing the article in a story or article type form, I'll use paragraph headings and organize my thoughts and comments in that format.

### **Greens:**

The vegetative cover found on greens varies from bentgrass to fescue. With the cool temperatures that the ocean provides throughout the year, a fair amount of fescue maintained at 1/4 inch can be found on several greens in Scotland. Bentgrasses are primarily a mixture or blend of many varieties. As a result of the different varieties and types of grasses grown on the greens, a very mottled appearance results. However, with the greens being mowed daily and "sanded" frequently, they have outstanding playing qualities. The greens hold a shot very well and putt very true. The term topdressing is not used very frequently in Scotland. In Scotland, many of the greens are 150 years old and have been constructed with sand. When greens are topdressed today, they continue to apply

light amounts of sand. Consequently, the term standing is used instead of topdressing. The decaying thatch and mat along with the roots provides adequate organic matter for water retention.

#### **Irrigation:**

Irrigation is just becoming available for golf course maintenance in Scotland. Several years ago, St. Andrews installed pop-up sprinklers around the greens. Looking out of my hotel window one morning, I witnessed the problem they had at Troon Golf Club with the pop-up sprinklers they recently installed. Later that morning while playing Troon, the problems of over-irrigation were evident. However, with the sandy soil, drainage is adequate and wet feet are infrequent. So no matter where I go, problems with irrigation confront people who maintain golf courses.

#### **Titles:**

My last sentence mentioned those who maintain golf courses. In Scotland, the term, golf course superintendent, has not become part of golf society's vocabulary. In Scotland, the individual who maintains the golf course is still known or referred to as the greenkeeper. When talking with native golfers or caddies in trying to locate the golf course superintendent, I received many puzzled or perplexed looks. However, as soon as I mentioned the greenkeeper, their faces lit up with a smile, and they were very helpful in locating the man who takes care of the course. In Scotland, I found the greenkeeper to be a very friendly, warm and hospitable individual who willingly talked about the golf course, his equipment and the practices he used in keeping it in playing condition.

#### **Conditions:**

As mentioned earlier, the conditions of the greens were very desirable in that they held a well hit shot and had a smooth, true and desirable putting surface. However, with irrigation lacking on many fairways, it is not possible to provide the "cemetery green" conditions that prevail here in the United States. However, with a monthly rainfall of two to three inches, adequate moisture is usually available for turfgrass growth. Unfortunately, last year many areas of Scotland experienced a drought period and the condition of fairways was not as favorable as in previous years, according to several greenskeepers and other individuals. After having played thirteen courses in an eight day period, I am convinced the American golfer expects perfect conditions every time he steps off the tee. Although growth conditions were not optimum during my visit and the courses may have been off-color slightly, the fundamental rule of golf was still in effect at all golf courses except two. The basic rule of golf is that you touch the ball twice, once when you place it on the little peg while on the tee, and the second time is when the ball is retrieved from the hole. Only two courses had "preferred lies" sign on the first tee. At one course, the reason for the sign was that they had just finished topdressing the fairways the peat and all of the areas, especially divots, had not regrown. Another course had the preferred lies sign on the first tee until growth conditions improved so that minimal damage would result to the course.

#### **Bunkers:**

On golf courses in Scotland, very deep depressions, frequently 30-45 inches in depth with vertical stacks of sod around the edges and sand on the bottom, can be found on the edges of fairways and greens. With these

sand bunkers, it is impossible to putt out or chip out, as many American tourist-players quickly discover. It is essential that you blast out of the sand with a wedge. Unfortunately, with a 35 to 40 inch sod wall in front of you, and on occasions it might be 4 or 5 feet, it may be necessary to play the ball out sideways or backwards. Of the thirteen courses that I played during my eight or nine day stay, none had rakes on the golf course to smooth the footprints after hitting a sand shot. It is the golfer's responsibility to smooth the footprints with the sand iron or wedge. Raking the bunkers, usually daily, is completed by the greenkeeping crew. Should your ball come to rest in a footprint or area not completely smoothed by the sole of a club, you play the ball as you find it. As a result of the steep faces or walls on the bunkers and the condition of the sand, many interesting shots are experienced.

#### **Roughs:**

Our good friend, Paul Voykin's article, "Overgrooming is Overspending", must be required reading for every greenkeeper in Scotland. One course last year cut their rough in August for the first time. Their reason for cutting the rough at that time was that the nearby farmer offered to buy it as hay for his sheep to be sure they had enough to eat for the winter months, as his pastures and fields had not grown due to the drought mentioned earlier. When the rough is not 18-20 inch fescue, it is usually made up of whin, gorse or heather. Whin is a bush that will grow to a height of 6-8 feet with an attractive yellow flower in the early spring. Gorse is a low-growing shrub with many barbs and pricklers, frequently discouraging golfers from searching for their ball in the rough. Heather, another low-growing shrub with an attractive purple flower, makes it very difficult to play a shot from the rough due to its woody nature. Unfortunately for the golfer whose shot strays or is short off the tee, as the first 100 yards of every hole is rough, an interesting second shot results.

These are just a few of my thoughts and observations after spending a week and a half in Scotland, the home of golf. As my travel schedule allows this summer, I am looking forward to attending some of the Midwest monthly meetings and continue to exchange ideas.

Sincerely yours,

**Carl H. Schwartzkopf**

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