

LETTERS

England's Arthur speaks out

To the Editor:

In an article in the September issue of *Golf Course News*, a Bradley S. Klein, who you state is a freelance writer, claims that in the mid-1980s, "several inland superintendents lost their fairways and their jobs as a result of following my advice."

This is totally untrue. I fully admit that many greenkeepers and golf clubs have indeed claimed that they were following my advice and methods when in fact they were not; but those who have followed my advice and sensibly implemented a program which involves the education of their club officials and members, have achieved excellent results and none has ever lost his job. In fact, even where over-enthusiastic implementation in too short a time resulted in somewhat traumatic course conditions (which is not my policy) and greenkeepers were under threat, they could and did rely on my help to find them more congenial posts. In fact many of the top posts in British greenkeeping today are filled by highly respected headmen as a direct result of my recommendations to their prospective employers, and who are my personal friends.

You should also know that I did not and do not claim to have "invented" the policy of minimal fertilizer (nitrogen only) and controlled irrigation. I have not, neither do those who follow this policy, ever say "no fertilizer and no water." Of course different advice is given to different courses in different ecological environments.

In an adjacent column you describe the fertilizer mix used at Fraserburgh by Gordon Moir. This is almost exactly the same as is

used on all the courses, from famous championship links to small town courses, following this policy whether advised by the S.T.R.I. Agronomists or myself. It is in fact the published policy of the Sports Turf Research Institute.

I have been preaching this logical and sensible gospel for well over 40 years — I did not invent it. You seem to imply I am or was some come-day, go-day character. You do not seem to realize that I was for 18 years responsible for the condition of all the courses on which the Royal and Ancient staged their Championships including of course The Open — as their consultant agronomist.

Clearly you do not know that I was responsible for advising over 550 golf clubs in Europe as well as the U.K. I am both qualified, with a degree in agricultural botany dating back to the days when degrees meant something more than they do today and also the most experienced agronomist in the U.K. I was trained starting over 50 years ago by some of this country's leading botanists and golf course management is a study of botany not chemistry.

You do not apparently know that I was co-author of "The Way Forward" as a founder member of the R & A's Greenkeeping Panel (of which I am still an active member) which document is the basis of the so-called revolution in golf today referred to by Mr. Klein. You should know that I enjoy the confidence not only of the R & A and the Research Station (S.T.R.I.) but also of the USGA Green Section.

Let me make it very clear that the prevalence of *Poa annua* on so many British courses (which I found ech-

oed on many temperate zone U.S. courses) is a direct result of gross overfeeding and overwatering in a frenzied chase for color which too many golfers equate with quality. Ask Al Radko - ever to be respected for his comments that "Green is not Great"!

J.H. Arthur
East Devon
England

Editor's note: J.H. Arthur is without doubt one of Britain's most respected agronomists. His distinguished work through the Royal and Ancient Golf Club has greatly advanced turf management, and he has championed the cause of classical linksland turf.

As one of nine co-authors of the pathbreaking R&A Greenkeeping Panel report, "The Way Forward," he has contributed to much creative thinking in British golf course maintenance. He enjoys, and deserves, the confidence of prominent golf associations and turf specialists on both sides of the Atlantic.

Bradley S. Klein's article in the September issue of *Golf Course News* makes clear that British golf course superintendents are engaged in a controversy regarding the appropriate model for turf management. Such a lively debate is a sign of vitality in the industry.

As a prominent voice in the field, Arthur holds strong views on (to quote Klein) "the smallest amounts of water and fertilizer needed." The article never claims that Arthur "invented" this policy, nor that he ever advocated "no fertilizer and no water."

Indeed, the major point of the article is that Arthur's position represents a return to traditional greenkeeping values. Arthur's ideas are certainly important and highly regarded. However, they are by no means universally accepted.

As Arthur himself acknowledges, a number of superintendents found themselves in trouble

with their clubs when they began implementing what they claimed or understood to be his maintenance program. There are legitimate grounds for debating whether such failures came about through bad luck, individual error on the part of superintendents, "over-enthusiastic implementation" of a sound plan, or carrying out a program that was simply not appropriate for local conditions.

The fact remains, as Arthur himself acknowledges, that in a few cases the results were "somewhat traumatic" and superintendents were held accountable, to the point where they began looking elsewhere for work.

There is much merit in Arthur's

views on greens maintenance, and no one can dispute the considerable success his programs have enjoyed. His expertise and the forthrightness and consistency with which he has advocated his views are acknowledged by everyone in the profession.

Letters welcomed

We hope our readers feel free to write letters to the editor concerning stories we have published, or issues concerning the golf course industry.

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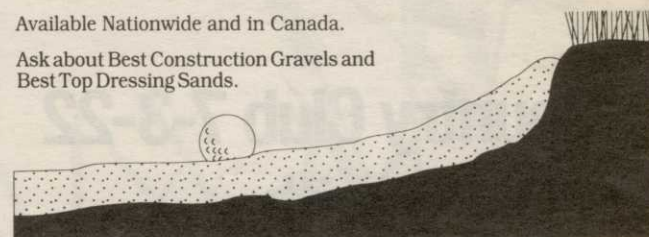
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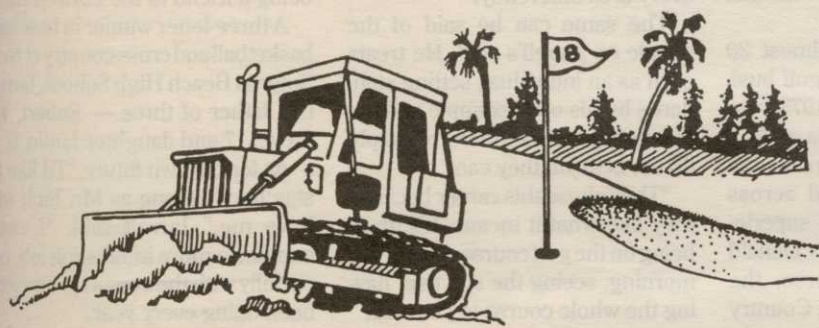
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