

Irishman Brennan named PGA European Greenkeeper of the Year

DUBLIN, Ireland—The Toro/PGA European Tour Greenkeeper of the Year Award has been won by Irishman Fintan Brennan, who is deputy head greenkeeper at the new Bernhard Langer-designed PGA European Tour Course here at Portmarnock.

Brennan, who was a block-release student at Elmwood College in Cupar,

Fife, clinched the title from seven other students at the National Final at Aldwark Manor, near York, home of the British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association.

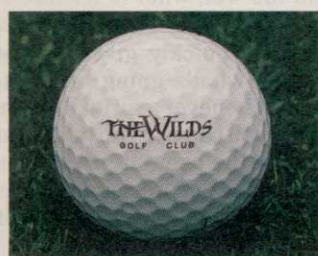
The 32-year-old former metal fabricator won a 10-week trip this month to the United States where he will undertake a turf management course at the University of Mas-

sachusetts and visit the Toro Co.'s headquarters in Minneapolis, Riverside, Calif. and the Golf Course Superintendents of America Association Show in Las Vegas.

Joint runners-up and winners of a trip to the PGA European Tour Greenkeepers Conference in Penina, Portugal, last December, and the opportunity to work in the preparation of two venues of PGA

European Tour events next season, were Noel Greene of Gay Hill Golf Club and Warwickshire College and John Bachelor of Mendip Spring Golf Club and Cannington College.

"I'm absolutely delighted and I hope that I can do the other seven finalists proud when I go to the States," said Brennan.



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Alternative spikes

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and places like wet wooden bridges or slick surfaces. The convention steel spike can be equally as dangerous on the concrete surfaces... It's a question of relearning how to walk."

For its part, the PGA Tour's Tournament Players Clubs have adopted a wait-and-see attitude.

Director of Golf Course Maintenance Operations Cal Roth said: "We have not required alternative spikes on any of our courses. We're monitoring their use to see how they perform. Depending on their success, we'll make a determination at some point in time as to where we will go."

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Discussion of the agronomic implications of plastic spikes versus metal spikes continues one-sided.

Although saying, "No question, there is a huge improvement" on putting surfaces with plastic spikes, the USGA's Snow said the association is "trying to be a little bit cautious about coming out and promoting them." Its closest move so far has been to announce that on courses serving as 1997 USGA championship qualifying sites, the association will enforce the banning of metal spikes if those facilities have non-spike policies.

"There's no question that the conventional healing time for turf under metal spikes is four to six weeks, but with soft spikes it's a matter of days," said Webster. "The reason is, you're not damaging parts of the plant that are required for recovering. Soft spikes cause more of a foliar damage, while metal spikes get into the crown of the plant where cell division goes on and you destroy or damage the plants' ability to recover."

Webster pointed to a major difference between bentgrass and poa annua greens over a period of time. Since bentgrasses recover vegetatively and poa re-seeds itself, "there is a big difference on the bent greens, and the newer clubs are more apt to encourage soft spikes," he said.

"I just know there are no spike marks at the end of the day. Any agronomic benefits are gravy," said Witt. "It's [the ban] taken a very, very sour subject [spike marks] ... and has eliminated that problem."