

by Ron Hall, associate editor

Are Brits better?

An English pub is a friendlier place than an American bar. People smile more. The beer is better.

A good pub, like an old friend, gathers you in and embraces you. That's the magic being weaved in a small gathering of English blokes just before the last pint is emptied, the wrap-up to the opening day of Britain's third annual National Turf Conference.



Our drinking mates? Bill Mills, editor of "The Groundsman" magazine, Ray Davies and Peter George, both park managers (administrator/groundsman) in southern England boroughs. We talk shop.

Is England ahead of us in the care of the public sports fields? Does the English grounds superintendent do a better job than his American counterpart?

Yes and no.

An illustration from sports.

Ian Botham, a strapping 29-year-old, is tearing up the island cricket scene. He's a hero on the playing field and a scratch golfer who drives a 401-yard hole on a Spanish golf course, signs a million-dollar contract with Wilson, then, as legend has it, jumps into his togs to dispatch another opponent on the cricket pitch.

"An English Rambo," grins Ray. "He's hit more 'sixes' than any man in history."

"Well, is that like a grand slam?"

"Yea, that's it," Ray agrees with a perplexed wrinkle of his brows. He's as unfamiliar with American baseball as we are of cricket, but too diplomatic to show it.

Comparing the English park grounds manager to an American counterpart is like comparing Botham to K.C. Royals third baseman George Brett who flicks wicked line drives in seeming effortless disdain. Similarities and differences.

Take baseball diamonds, for instance. The numbers in Any Town, U.S.A., would astound and perhaps dismay an Englishman. Just a few, however, get the attention the Brit— as a matter of routine—devotes to his *fine turf*.

The knowledge needed to maintain the commonplace cricket pitch or lawn bowling square hones the average English groundkeeper as keenly as a topflight golf super in the States. And that's in addition to their soccer and rugby pitches which compare favorably to our football fields.

That's not the only difference.

"Certainly the financial rewards aren't there," says Mills, the magazine editor.

An annual salary of \$20,000 is virtually unheard of for a British grounds manager, even the best.

These are the things you learn over pints of warm lager on a balmy fall evening in Nottingham.

GOLF

GCSAA Mid-Year 'wasn't horrible'

Jim Prusa, associate executive director of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, sums up the first Mid-Year Convention and Trade Show quite succinctly:

"It wasn't a horrible showing. I'm optimistic about how it went."

More than 1,100 people showed up for the event, Sept. 20-23 in the Indianapolis, Ind. Hoosier Dome. That included more than 200 exhibitors and more than 900 actual attendees, though there were 180 no-shows Sunday.

"People kind of expected it to be a biggie," Prusa observes. "But the horrible heat that weekend hurt our Sunday attendance. Who would've thought that it'd be over 90 degrees in Indianapolis in late September?"

Attendance at the seminars was 145, just about the same as the 1981 International Turfgrass Conference the GCSAA sponsors every year.

An excellent session on the water crisis was held Monday, the same day researchers being funded by the GCSAA and the United States Golf Association made their reports.

"It was the first time in the history of the industry that we were able to bring together a group under common funding of the GCSAA and the USGA, and allow them to tell us what they are doing," Prusa says.

LPGA professional Julie Inkster was celebrity hostess of the annual benefit golf tournament, held at the Golf Club of Indiana.

The future of the Mid-Year Convention has not been determined.

TURFGRASS

Ohio researcher says fertilize in autumn

Ohio State University researcher Anthony J. Koski says don't wait for spring to feed your lawn. You'll get healthier turf by putting down nitrogen in fall too.

Says Koski, summarizing three years of study, a strong fall program provides:

- **Better winter color.** Fall fertilization may keep the grass green into mid-December.

- **Quicker spring green-up.** The excess energy produced and stored in late autumn stimulates growth in early spring.

- **Enhanced root growth.** The nitrogen fertilizer applied in autumn gives the lawn's root system a head start in spring development.