



Dave Kipton, chief groundsman for London's Queens Club, with the lawn tennis courts he's cared for the past 20 years.

tional competitors, usually the week before Wimbledon.

Court tips

Here's how Kimpton prepares these turf courts:

- Each spring he scarifies, passing sharp blades over the courts five or six times. Spikes are criss-crossed an additional six or eight times, the final pass with one-inch spikes for overseeding.

- An application of chlordane kills the earthworms. Worm castings play havoc with a bouncing tennis ball.

- Fungicides are usually needed several times each summer. "I just tend to keep an eye on things," says Kimpton. "If I see something down there, I have to tweak it."

- Fertilizer in a light peat base is applied twice annually, in the spring and the fall. The fall feeding is heavier with phosphorus and potassium, the spring application with nitrogen.

- Sand topdressing at least twice each season helps smooth out the wrinkles.

- Soil pH is checked at least once every two seasons.

Kimpton's job is to maintain the health of the turf while providing the hardest, smoothest surface possible. Ransomes reel mowers keep the turf at $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch.

Says Kimpton, "it's getting to the stage where I'm beginning to need a head groundsman to do some of my work." And part of that reason, of course, is the attention his courts get from world caliber players.

Says Kimpton: "The professionals play here four or five weeks each year, and the wear they create is more se-

vere in that short period of time than the members the rest of the season."

And the banned McEnroe, a three-time champion at the Queen's Club?

It seems unpleasant words were spoken when he disputed court time on one of the all-weather courts.

"I guess it's bit snobbish," Kimpton says with a hint of a smile in his blue eyes.

—Ron Hall

SOUTER OF STIRLING

Scotsman John Souter's international reputation grows as the rescuer of sports playing surfaces. Providing proper drainage is his starting point.

John Souter, stonefaced in thought, sits in the gloom of Glasgow's Ibrox Stadium, in the director's box. The people to know fill these sheltered, midfield seats high above play. These are the people who gather at halftime in a cozy paneled room to trade pleasantries over coffee and tasty bite-sized pastries.

Souter earned his station in this group.

This 40ish Scot—always, it seems, dressed for business—makes a com-

fortable living giving his sport-loving countrymen with what they want. And what they want is grass that can take the pounding of cleated athletes during Scotland's damp North Sea winter. That's the season for rugby and soccer here, played in huge concrete stadiums brimming with rabid fans. Deep-seated rivalries lure busloads of excited spectators, dressed in club colors and chanting club songs, miles from home.

In contrast, the enigmatic Souter.

Business is business in his world, no shenanigans. His employees don't drink and drive. They, like Souter, dress well; they pick their words with care. And fun is fun. Souter's light-hearted presentation honoring Dr. Bill Daniel slid into a round of song at the Midwest Turf Conference last March. His wit, sharp but not unkind, is often aimed inward.

Rain falls

Today soaked Ibrox pulsates as the hometown Rangers match up with the visiting soccer team from Dundee. A weeklong rain that barely slackens prior to gametime has Souter, in a natty camel overcoat, his straight blonde hair pasted over a balding pate, surveying the shredded grass in the goal mouths.

Earlier this week this same Ibrox field drank in three inches of rain while the Rangers battled a Spanish team in what one local sports writer described "as the worst conditions I've seen in 25 years of covering the game." The scars of that contest, just three days later, are not evident.

That the game is played at all speaks well for the dogged inbred persistence of the turfgrass (mostly perennial ryegrass). And for Souter's work. Ibrox is just one of many fields installed or



John Souter, left, and Eddie Connaughton review drawings for a new Scottish golf course.

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ENGLAND



Soccer is big business in the UK. This Glasgow field, Ibrox Stadium, gets Souter's attention.

renovated by Souter since 1967.

Souter's reputation, fueled by an understanding of proper drainage, expands in spite of a tiny (by U.S. standards) support team of just five trusted field foremen. "Each of my boys can take care of a big job," says Souter. These men personally oversee maintenance on many of the of the 18 major fields in the UK which he has renovated.

Rows of sand

Drainage is the cornerstone, and one of the tools he uses is the so-called Morton Sand Slitter, devised by Irishman Alec Morton. This machine, looking like a pregnant cyclone spreader, lays 3,000 yards of sand slits (50mm wide, 100-300mm deep) daily. There are reportedly only two in the world, Morton's and Souter's.

The success of this sand-slitting technique is going international.

In 1984 Souter jetted to Malta in the sunny Mediterranean to rescue a four-year-old, clay mud pit known as the National Stadium at Ta'Qali, one stop on the prestigious FIFA (soccer's international ruling body) circuit. Just four years old, the Ta'Qali stadium had been described as "notorious" by writers.

Souter recommended working 1,600 tons of medium/fine sand (125-500 microns) four inches into the regraded and recrowned field. Periphery and lateral drains, as well as sideline manholes, were installed along with irrigation.

His maintenance program (the Malta grounds staff came to Scotland for training) includes spiking three times weekly plus frequent sand top dressing. Late in 1985 the field received additional sand slits. The success of this

work garnered Souter contracts for seven additional soccer pitches. Work began on four of these last fall.

Other directions

But while sports field renovation spotlights Souter's work, his firm, Souter of Stirling, grows in other directions including the design and renovation of golf courses, and the sale of turf machinery and products.

The newest member of his staff, Eddie Connaughton, an ambitious young Irishman with a Purdue University turfgrass background, took to the road as Souter's salesman this past summer. Ever-smiling Connaughton, a scratch golfer who played for Ireland before earning his Purdue letter jacket (which he still wears with some pride), works out of Souter's headquarters in a low-slung block building in Stirling, dominated—as many Scottish cities are—by a brooding castle. A staff of 20 works here about 40 minutes from Edinburgh.

Souter, however, professes little concern for getting bigger.

"I'm not looking to get much larger for the quality aspect of our work," he says. "After that I think you get into buck shifting."

Here on the outskirts of industrial Glasgow the young athletes, hair still damp from the showers, file out of now-silent Ibrox into the rain. No celebrations here, the hometown Rangers lost.

Souter is in the basement examining huge conduits which snake into and under the stadium's turfgrass surface and will keep it from freezing in the months ahead.

—Ron Hall