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GCM

GOLF CLUB MANAGEMENT

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SUMMERTIME BLUES

More rounds, more problems?

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

- Pye Bredenkamp
- Golf Data – 20 years in the business
- Are your staff being paid enough?
- Water tax – the answer to a looming crisis?

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Chainsaw servicing

Different strokes for different folks

Neglect servicing and you risk damaging your chainsaw, lose performance and compromise safety. Deon van der Merwe from STIHL South Africa gives some helpful hints on keeping your chainsaw running smoothly for longer.

I am led to believe that par for most golf courses is around 72 and to complete a round (excluding the rounds at the nineteenth hole) would take a good few hours. 72 strokes in three or four hours is not too strenuous for most people, but let's look at the chainsaw in the greenkeeper's tool shed.

Typically, a chainsaw under no load revs at around 12 000 rpm, and that figure drops down to around 9 000 rpm under load. There are two strokes, or up and down movements of the piston, for every revolution, so even under load the chainsaw piston is doing an impressive 18 000 strokes per minute, which equates to an incredible 300 strokes per second. Not even Tiger Woods comes close to that in terms of performance!

From this we can see that servicing and maintenance is vital for these small motors, so herewith a few guidelines and tips to keep equipment in tiptop shape.

Fuel and oil

We need to ensure that the fuel we use is fresh and the correct type, and that it is mixed with the correct two stroke oil at the correct ratio. STIHL recommends the use of unleaded fuel mixed at a 50:1 ratio (i.e. 100 ml oil per 5 ℓ of petrol) using STIHL two stroke oil. The inside of the fuel containers should be checked on a regular basis for dirt and water contamination.

As a chainsaw requires a special oil to lubricate the chain, we must ensure that we are using the correct type of oil for this purpose.

A little common sense goes a long way when looking after a chainsaw



Air filters

A chainsaw air filter needs to be cleaned and inspected after every usage. Failure to do so could result in the saw ingesting dirty air, or, in the case of a clogged air filter, not enough air, which will cause the motor to run rich, resulting in a loss of power. Do NOT use compressed air to clean any filter, as this damages the filter material and will allow dirt and foreign debris into the motor.

As there are various types of air filter, please refer to the Owners Manual for the correct procedures regarding cleaning and maintaining air filters.

Sprocket cover

Remove and clean with a brush or rag. Do not use petrol or solvents. Look for any loose or missing components and inspect the drive sprocket for wear and damage. Ensure that the oil feed channel is clean and free of debris.

Chain and guide bar

Remove the chain from the guide bar and inspect for any damage to the cutters or the body of the chain. A sap glazed and stretched chain is a good indication of a chain-lubrication failure or problem.

Clean out the bar groove and oil feed holes on the guide bar and check for any damage and burring. If the guide bar is equipped with a nose sprocket, it must be checked for wear and damage. Sharp, pointed nose sprockets are a good indication of a worn and stretched chain.

Remount the chain, tension correctly and sharpen according to instructions.

General check

Check and ensure that all safety features, i.e. chain brake, anti-vibration rubbers, etc, are present and functioning correctly. No chainsaw should be used if any of these components are faulty or not fitted, as this could pose a potentially lethal situation for the operator.

Check, replace or tighten any loose screws and fasteners, and ensure that all covers and handles are in position and are serviceable.



Deon van der Merwe, Technical Services STIHL SA, author of this article

There are certain risks involved in using a chainsaw, and it could be a hazardous tool in untrained hands. Therefore last but by no means least, we need to ensure that the operator is issued with, and uses, all the correct protective apparel and is correctly trained in the use and basic maintenance of the saw. The operator needs to be in good health and reasonably fit, and for obvious reasons the consumption of alcohol or the taking of any drugs which could impair the judgment and dexterity of the operator before using the saw is strictly prohibited.

Chain sharpening

Extend the life of your chain and guide bar and keep your chainsaw cutting at optimum speed by keeping the chain sharp at all times. Providing the chain has not stretched, it is more cost-effective to sharpen rather than replace it. Either take the chain to your dealer or sharpen it yourself. Genuine STIHL files and sharpening kits are available for all STIHL saw chains.

If implemented correctly, these simple guidelines will lessen downtime and extend the life of our chainsaws, and keep our greens greener and our fairways fairer!

For more information look up STIHL in your local directory, contact STIHL toll free on 0800 336 996 or visit www.stihl.co.za.

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Compleat Golfer MAGAZINE



FROM THE EDITOR

For all the frustrations that come from living in South Africa, we cannot complain of lack of scandals to talk about at 19th holes. After we have exhausted topics such as our cricket team's hopeless performance against England in the ICC tournament and Ernie Els' dismal showing in The Presidents Cup, the mention of 'Lying Lenny,' our man at the helm of Athletics SA, will keep a conversation going. And as stories of gross ineptitude at Eskom and the ridiculous revelations concerning the ill-conceived arms deal come to light, we shouldn't have been surprised when it was revealed by the Competition Commission that the big fertilizer companies have been involved in all sorts of skullduggery – embarking on a mission to destroy any little company that had the temerity to sell their products at prices below the accepted rip-off margin. The big boys were given a slap on the wrist and fined, as if they cared; they had more than covered the cost of this penalty by overcharging for their fertilizer for a long time.

At least our government officials are doing their level best to keep the luxury car market afloat. The topic of dysfunctional municipalities has become rather tired, but I am sure that the prickly issue of rates and taxes for golf courses is again going to cause some consternation in our industry. The best form of defence has always been attack – and I believe that golf courses should now insist that they be not only exempt from any form of taxation, but also be subsidised as precious 'green lungs.' This might be a tough sell, particularly for those courses that insist on keeping non-indigenous trees and shrubbery on their properties.

Then there was the matter of that much-anticipated, hard-hitting interview with SAGA's president Enver Hassen on TV. Talk about being offered chilled Champagne and receiving only warm, flat beer! The last straw was the guy from Kimberley who phoned in to complain that his prize at some meaningless competition had been given away – riveting stuff, which certainly fitted right in with the topic of discussion. I can only assume that all the people in the industry who complain so bitterly about virtual clubs, the handicapping system, the increased costs involved in changing service providers and the development issue, couldn't get through, or perhaps they really don't give a damn.

On a much more positive note, *GCM's* Western Cape Workshop was hosted by De Zalze, and although one appreciates that for many of our invitees the trip to Stellenbosch was a little far, the effort made by those who did attend was encouraging. A sincere thank you to our speakers: Wayne Krambeck from Pinnacle Point, Gustav Putter representing Matkovich and Hayes who came all the way from Durban, Advance Seeds' Neels Harmuth who came from Krugersdorp, as did Talborne's Pierre Kotze and Smith Turf's Lionel Coetzee who travelled from Johannesburg. We assumed that because we were in wine country, we might find someone from that industry to speak, but we were wrong. Fortunately Dave Hansen was on hand to deliver an impromptu talk on wine that was both informative and entertaining. To Dave and his team from De Zalze – we appreciated the hospitality.





5 STARS FOR PINNACLE POINT

Compleat Golfer* and *GCM's publisher Simon Turck presents Pinnacle Holding's Wayne Krambeck with the *Compleat Golfer* 5-Star Golf Experience Award. Wayne Krambeck also delivered a talk on environmental matters at the *GCM* Western Cape Workshop.

Pinnacle Point is recognised as being one of the most ecologically friendly golf courses in South Africa.



WELL DONE RANDPARK

General manager of Randpark Doug Bain (left) and the club's director of golf Derek Lloyd received the *Compleat Golfer* award for the Most Improved Clubhouse. Since the major renovations to this large structure, the atmosphere has changed completely, and the improved ambience has paid dividends. Members and visitors have responded to the club's new feel, and the turnover of food and beverage has increased dramatically.



LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

George Harvey is pictured here with his son Jared, one of the star performers during KZN's victory in the Interprovincial played at Durban Country Club.

George, the head coach of the Ernie Els Foundation, is a former amateur champion and was one of the finest players ever to come out of Zimbabwe – and Jared is following in his dad's footsteps.



'Kappy' comes home

Richard Kaplan (above) has been appointed as director of golf at the soon-to-be-reopened Houghton Golf Club. Kaplan, a former amateur international who also enjoyed a distinguished career as a tour professional, will be in charge of golf operations at his old club, although there will be nothing 'old' when the club is reopened in January. The course has been redesigned by Jack Nicklaus, the club has a new clubhouse, and is hardly recognisable as the same venue that has hosted SA Open Championships, the SA PGA Championship and Alfred Dunhill Championships. The new general manager of Houghton, Eric van der Velde (left) and Gary Buskin (right), the club's captain who has played a large role in the revival of the club after an ill-fated development threatened to put paid to the future of this golfing institution, are determined that the new Houghton will take its place as one of the finest golfing facilities in South Africa.



TRY THIS FOR SIZE

A tough fit into a Christmas stocking, but for some this might represent the ultimate 'boy's toy'. This mean-looking cart imported by E-Z-GO is probably better suited to bundu-bashing than cruising the fairways, although you wouldn't want to scratch the metallic paint job. With a price tag of R140, 000 it presumably comes with a bumper sticker that asks: "Have you driven over a Club Car or a Yamaha lately?"



CENTRAL GOLF UNION NURTURING TALENT

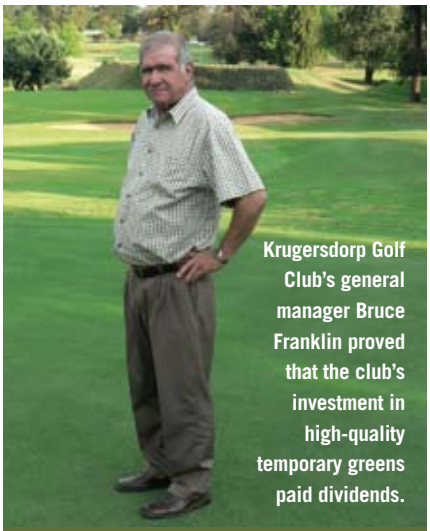
With the help of the South African Golf Development Board, Emmanuel Maswoliedza looks like realising his potential as one of our country's top golfers, and is currently enrolled at the Gary Player School of Champions. In fact, Emmanuel has shown so much promise, the academy has offered to help him for another year.

"Emmanuel can be proud of himself," says Danny Baleson, operations director of the Gary Player Golf Experience. "He has assimilated well, he works hard and is well-liked by the coaches."

Maswoliedza is one of a few youngsters that are showing all the signs of becoming champions, and the CGU is doing a sterling job of unearthing golfing talent.



Errol Mills, vice-president of the CGU and Danny Baleson look on as Emmanuel shows his technical skills that have been finely honed by the coaching staff at the Gary Player School of Champions.



Krugersdorp Golf Club's general manager Bruce Franklin proved that the club's investment in high-quality temporary greens paid dividends.

TEMPORARY GREENS?

You must be joking!

When Krugersdorp Golf Club undertook to build temporary greens with a difference, the wisdom of planting them with A1/A4 bent was queried. As it turned out, this experimental method proved to be a great success, and these 'temporary' surfaces could be the envy of some clubs that might wish that they had permanent greens as good as these.

"We budgeted for a considerable loss in traffic while we completed the rebuilding project of our greens," said Bruce Franklin, "but I am happy to say that golfers loved our temporary greens, and we have continued to see big fields – in fact we more than doubled the anticipated revenue while our normal greens were closed."



***GCM* workshops are an excellent opportunity for networking. Here Arabella's Adam Veysey and *Compleat Golfer's* Brendan Barratt hatch a plan to play more golf.**



While some clubs will bemoan the amount of rain they receive this summer, golf clubs in the drought-stricken Garden Route will be praying for as much as a drizzle.

Summertime blues

For most clubs the height of summer means increased rounds as fair-weather golfers rediscover their love of the game. This means increased revenue, but this busiest time of the year also involves a host of problems for the club and course managers to solve.

Generally it has been a rather miserable winter for most clubs, and although spring was accompanied by green shoots emerging on our golf courses, the economy has for the most part remained in hibernation. Income from the corporate market, normally the 'icing on the cake' for many clubs, has continued to dwindle, and the number of golf days has fallen quite dramatically – some clubs have estimated that this income has been reduced by more than 30 percent. Corporate spend is largely beyond the control of a golf club, and *GCM* has heard from more than a few clubs that their regular clients, even if they can afford to continue to host golf days, now believe that inviting their customers to a lavish outing at a golf club shows bad taste.

The golf tourism market has also slowed, which has hardly been surprising. South Africa may well still be an attractive option for the intrepid 'jet-setter' and the cost-conscious traveller, but besides being a long-haul destination for most, the safety issue is a major concern, and the spate of strikes and service-delivery upheavals has done little for the cause.

Member rounds have also generally shown a decrease and, with few exceptions, food and beverage earnings have taken a dip. But it is interesting to note that certain clubs have managed to buck this trend, and it is worth looking at how certain strategies have proven to be successful.

Firstly, it is quite obvious that the cash-flush clubs (and there are precious few of these around) that have bravely embarked on programmes to improve their facilities, although not immune from the economic slump, have continued to attract golfers and seem to be faring better than most. Of course the vast majority of clubs do not have the luxury of a healthy bank account and a large, mostly affluent membership. But even some of those that exist on a 'hand-to-mouth' basis have shown that, by introducing innovative ideas, arranging special competitions and effectively luring members to participate in these events, they have kept the wolf and creditors from the door. The clubs that have drastically cut costs on course maintenance and reduced their staff complement are in for a rough ride – they might well find their rounds increasing during the summer months, but in the longer term they will discover that visitors will be unlikely to return if their experience does not meet expectations.

During December, traditionally the holiday

courses cash in, but these clubs should beware of trying to make too much of a good thing. A common complaint made by the holiday golfer is that certain courses try to squeeze far too many rounds in, resulting in veritable bunfights on their courses. Poorly controlled fields packed with novices may bring in a quick buck, but this policy of 'making hay while the sun shines' only results in unhappy customers that do not enjoy standing in queues to pay greenfees, queuing on the first tee, waiting to play every shot, and being involved in log-jams at the halfway house and the 19th hole. Good course marshals are worth their weight in gold during these peak times, yet many are hopelessly ineffective. Some clubs do not even employ people to keep the field moving, and if the management of these clubs believe that a field of golfers can look after itself they are gravely mistaken. In the United States and Australia one finds committee and board members volunteering their time to do duty at their clubs, and many are happy to become involved in everything from starting fields, marshalling and even serving behind the bar. This seldom happens at our clubs, but there is no reason why junior members on holiday couldn't be employed to help out. It is an unforgiveable crime for the food and beverage operation to be under-staffed when the clubhouse is full of hungry and thirsty customers who are not known to be particularly patient after spending almost six hours on the course. All too often one finds poorly trained casual workers attempting to relieve the pressure, but these workers, through no fault of their own, often only succeed in causing more confusion.

For the long-suffering greenkeepers, these times are the most trying of the year. Having hoards of holiday-makers descending on their courses, many of whom either simply do not know, or choose to ignore, the basic rules pertaining to the likes of bunker raking and repairing pitchmarks, is enough to severely test their sanity. I am sure many wonder why they diligently spent so much time carrying out spring treatments only to witness the wholesale destruction of their course by an unruly bunch of so-called golfers that are 'just having fun'. Anybody that has experienced the chaos that reigns at certain popular 'holiday' courses during December can make a compelling case for the introduction the 'Green Card' system that exists in Europe, where only golfers that have passed a competency test, which includes the rules and etiquette of the game, are allowed onto a course.

Summertime on the Highveld is when lightning strikes are most likely to occur, and in a limited poll of clubs *GCM* found that an alarming amount of them are ill-equipped to handle the treat of serious injury to golfers. At best early-warning systems are in place with serviceable sirens installed, but some clubs have irresponsibly done nothing to plan for ways of detecting imminent strikes and having methods of warning players on the course. Few clubs have the correct lightning protection for their clubhouses, and although golfers are generally safe indoors, it just takes one bolt of lightning to fry a club's telephone system, refrigerators, TVs or computers. Even more important during the summer months is the club's pump station, and should this be struck by a bolt of lightning at the hottest time of the year the results could be disastrous.

The fashionable winter grasses now being cultivated on courses may be superb surfaces on which to play, but they do not thrive in high temperatures. Good course managers have programmes in place to regularly syringe putting surfaces to keep them cool, but when the mercury rises and for some reason this is not done, this turf takes on a blueish hue – a sure sign that the grass is 'playing in injury time.' Of course the combination of heat and moisture presents the ideal combination for the development of a fungus, which is all the more likely to occur on badly drained areas.

George Gershwin, in his well-known song 'Summertime', suggested that during this period 'the living is easy', but Gershwin wasn't in the golf business. ■



The receding water level of the George Dam has golf clubs very worried as they prepare to enter the summer holiday season.



GOLF DATA

20 years at the top

The growth of Golf Data over the past two decades, which has seen a relatively small operation blossom into a company that has at times employed as many as a thousand people, has had nothing to do with luck. *GCM* spoke to Robbie Marshall, the man in charge.

If Robbie Marshall suffers from stress, he hides it well. It cannot be easy being at the helm of a company that, even by international standards, is a large operation. For the chairman, it means juggling a few balls (and a few bulldozers) at a time. If a golf course construction and maintenance company can be judged by its list of clients, Golf Data certainly qualifies as one of the blue-chip variety, but it is not Robbie Marshall's style to blow his own trumpet.

"Our first job 20 years ago was to convert Parkview's greens from cynoden to bent – all 18 holes which was a job worth about R30 000 – times have certainly changed," he says, with the ready smile for which he is known. Marshall has a keen sense of humour and he smiles a lot – even at a time when the course construction business in South Africa threatened to come to a grinding halt. "Despite the state of the economy, we are in the unique situation of having had an unusually busy year. In fact we will be opening more courses this year than any other in our 20-year history," he says, pointing out that Serengeti was unveiled, the major revamps of Glendower and Country Club Johannesburg's Rocklands were completed, and as we sat on the verandah at Country Club, Golf Data's teams were hard at work on the Humewood project, Wedgewood and the Tsitsikamma Coastal Reserve, all of which will be completed this year. "Fortunately our phones keep ringing, and we have had many enquiries from outside South Africa," he says. He also told us that another big project, the construction of a new 18-course north of Dainfern, had just been confirmed.

Anyone that knows Robbie Marshall will tell you that he is one of those likeable, down-to-earth people who has made a lot of friends in the business, and it is clear that judging by the loyalty shown by his company's clients, his team has never let any of them down. "We are fortunate to have had a fair share of the market, although we have never really chased business – the growth came about quite naturally," he says.

Golf Data has certainly become a powerful brand; the company is well known for quality work that is done on time. One would be hard



The revamp of Glendower, completed earlier this year, is one of many examples of the high-quality work done by Golf Data.

pressed to find anyone that would suggest that the company has ever under-delivered, and whether undertaking a small revamp or a major construction project for a high-profile client, the Golf Data team gives 100 percent. "Our reputation has always been based on integrity – something we have consistently strived to impress upon our staff. There are always budgetary constraints, but we have never ever considered taking any short cuts," says Marshall. Rather than spreading his team too thinly and risking a less-than-perfect end product, certain potentially lucrative contracts have been turned down in the past. The policy of the company has always been to either do something properly or not at all.

Another key to Golf Data's success has been to look after its staff, which has resulted in a family-like attitude among its personnel. "Obviously one loses valuable people from time to time, but generally our team members have enjoyed what they do and we look after them. Many of our staff members have been with us since we started back in 1989, but one cannot single out individuals as being critical to our success – the entire team has contributed to get us where we are today! Without dedicated people no business can flourish," he says.



Jack and Barbara Nicklaus with Robbie and Marie Marshall at Jack's final competitive round in the Open Championship at St Andrews in 2005.

Robbie looks back with some pride at the work the company has done constructing courses such as Peacanwood, Simola, Pearl Valley, St Francis Links and Serengeti, but even the less well known, smaller clubs have been just as important. "We were extremely lucky to have developed a relationship with Jack Nicklaus and his design company, but the smaller clubs where we have been involved have remained loyal friends – I must also say that we have been fortunate in never having a bad-debt problem, even in the toughest times," he says.

"My wife Marie – we have been married for 34 years – and my two daughters Kim and Claire have been so supportive. I spend so little time at home. In fact, in those 34 years I have probably only been at home for four of them," he says.

But with the sacrifices have come many special, unforgettable moments – "Meeting Jack Nicklaus and being one of few invitees to a dinner with him after his final Open Championship at St Andrews is one of many highlights," he says. "Marie and I were among only 50 people to attend this special occasion with Jack and his wife Barbara – one of the nicest ladies I have ever met.

"Probably the time I was most intimidated was when I had to negotiate with Johann Rupert prior to the redesign of Leopard Creek – but although I was scared, he turned out to be a pleasure to deal with, and he remains a man for whom I have the utmost respect," he says.



Robbie Marshall with his ready smile – he considers himself fortunate that the phones keep ringing, and Golf Data has enjoyed one of its most successful years to date.

GCM wishes Golf Data a happy 20th birthday, and joins the long list of the company's satisfied customers in hoping that Robbie and his team continue to prosper for the next two decades. ■



IN THE GAME OF GOLF

The management and staff of Golf Data wish to thank all our many clients, all of whom have become close fiends, for their valued support during the past two decades. It has been our pleasure to play a role in the construction of new courses, the redesign and refurbishment of existing layouts, and to maintain some of South Africa's finest golfing real estate.

The quality of South African golf courses now easily compares with the best anywhere in the world, and it has been an honour to have contributed in a small way to our country being recognised as a major golf destination, and it is gratifying to know that the golf courses where we have been involved will be enjoyed by thousands of golfers for many years to come.



Yours sincerely,
Robbie Marshall

Golf Data's clients include: Atlantic Beach, Bellville, Bell's Golf Academy, Benoni Lake, Clarens, Country Club Johannesburg Rocklands and Woodmead, Emfuleni, ERPM, Erinvale, Gardener Ross, Glendower, Houghton, Humewood, Katberg, Killarney, King Abdullah Economic City Saudi Arabia, Leopard Creek, Milnerton, Orkney, Oubaai, Parkview, Pearl Valley, Pecanwood, Pezula, Plettenberg Bay, Randfontein, Randpark, Reading, Royal Johannesburg and Kensington, Sabie River Bungalows, Serengeti, Simola, St Francis Links, Strand, Tsitsikamma, Victoria Country Club, Wedgewood



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Sincere thanks for 20 great years



PERFECTION MATTERS



THE JD 2500 the best ride-on greens mower? SAYS WHO?

On the cover of the November issue of *GCM* we featured the John Deere 2500B greens mower. In a test conducted by head course superintendent Gordon Johnston and his team at Serengeti, this machine was put through its paces, and the Afgri guys maintained that no other riding greens mower could compare. The team from CSE disputed this, and brought their equivalent Jacobsen mower, the G-Plex III, to Houghton to strut its stuff.

"We welcome any comparative tests, and we are interested to see how our products stack up against the opposition," says CSE's Alex Ackron. "In fact, we appreciate any constructive criticism – and we would be quick to report back to the manufacturers and point out any shortcomings if there are any," he says, adding that he doubts very much whether fault could be found with the G-Plex III.

The reason why the soon-to-be-opened Houghton Golf Club was chosen as a venue for the demonstration was because the club had recently awarded the contract to CSE to supply a fleet of Jacobsen turf maintenance machines to the club – certainly a feather in the company's cap.

The debate concerning the ride-on mower versus the walk-behind variety would seem to centre on speed and economy – to cut 18 greens with a walk-behind would obviously take considerably longer, and more units are required to get the job done in the same time as a ride-on. Besides the increased capital spend on six or eight walk-behinds (versus two ride-ons), there is also obviously an increased labour cost. Many course managers will contend that walk-behinds produce a superior cut, and until we conduct another test in an attempt to establish the validity of this, we will reserve judgment. The argument that a hydraulic system could leak and cause unsightly burns to a green is another reason why some course superintendents might view standard ride-ons with suspicion, but the point is made that with due care and proper maintenance this shouldn't happen. Increased compaction to greens that could result by the extra weight of a ride-on would



The CSE team at Houghton with the G-Plex III. From left to right, Leon Le Grange, Barry Reinders and Alex Ackron.



LEFT: The debate whether walk-behinds are preferable to ride-on greens mowers can be debated, but Jacobsen maintains that it has quality examples of both. RIGHT: The swing-out feature of the centre unit allows for ease of deck maintenance.

seem to be logical, yet many premier courses use them without noticeable compaction problems. But that argument can be shelved for another day, and it was Jacobsen's turn to 'sell' its machine in a like-for-like comparison with the John Deere.

The G-Plex III is reputed to feature superior ergonomics, and like its opposition, its seating position is fully adjustable to suit the operator. Ease of operation is difficult to quantify, and it is fair to say that all premier-brand equipment suppliers offer comprehensive training, as do Jacobsen. The Kubota power plant is certainly quiet and effective, and although John Deere can claim 14.6kW versus the Jacobsen's 14.2kW, the difference in power output is marginal. The John Deere can definitely claim a victory in the safety department, with its rollover protective structure coming as standard, whereas this is an optional extra on the Jacobsen. (It is hard to imagine an operator rolling a ride-on mower, yet we suppose stranger things have happened.)

The G-Plex III effectively replaced the Greens King IV Plus, and according to CSE's Barry Reinders, the technology was vastly improved. "The Greens King was more about basic mechanics – with levers, cables and so on. With the G-Plex for example, functions are streamlined with the hydraulic valves being controlled by solenoids. Features such as high-density nylon couplings are also a big improvement."

The Jacobsen claims to match or surpass John Deere when it comes to ease of maintenance, and CSE's Leon Le Grange pointed out the easy accessibility when performing routine functions. Certainly the on-board back-lapping function is a big plus. "Definitely the swing-out centre unit allows for increased ease of deck maintenance, and removal and refitting is a simple operation," says Leon.

The quality of cut produced by both machines could not be tested, but the Jacobsen's free-floating, steerable cutting heads are a likely to impress even on greens that are severely contoured.

Perhaps in order to establish which ride-on (or any other greens mower) can really claim to be the best, we would have to ask John Deere, Jacobsen and Toro to cut areas of the same green at identical heights, then cut a hole in each area, and have one of our best putters decide in which sector the ball rolls the best. It is doubtful whether clubs that are spending a lot of money on a new greens mower go to these lengths before making their decision, but perhaps they should.

Of course for many the deciding factors are probably price, with of course the service and the availability of spares. Based on an exchange rate of R7.90 to the dollar, the Jacobsen G-Plex III is priced at R199 252, which includes three 11-bladed reels, three grooved steel front rollers, and a set of three grass catchers. A good deal? The management of Houghton seems to think so.



THE LATEST GENERATION

CSE's Alex Ackron believes that the latest generation of Jacobsen's ride-on mowers, the Eclipse 322 (pictured below left), will prove to be most successful of all – a machine that will dominate the market. "We believe that Jacobsen is the world leader in hybrid technology, and that this machine will certainly be the most efficient on the market," he says. Like the Eclipse walk-behind, which is powered electrically (with its engine effectively driving a generator) and can be operated using only a battery pack if so desired, this technology eliminates the need for hydraulics all together. The Eclipse 322 will feature adjustable clip rates, the most modern 'steer-by-wire' technology, it will be quieter and will result in a fuel saving of at least 45 percent. "The 322 is being used in the States and other parts of the world at the moment, but we have decided to hold back on ordering this state-of-art machine until any teething problems, if any, have been sorted out – we didn't want to be the 'test bunnies,'" he says. The Eclipse 322 will be the only true hybrid available. ■

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Val Thomas was first introduced to readers of *GCM* at the Gauteng Workshop, where she delivered a most informative talk on trees. Since then, Val has supplied us with what has become one of the most popular sections in our publication – the regular 'Trees for Courses' feature. Of course Val is an experienced author, and her work on the *Sappi Tree Spotting* volumes has established her as a leading authority on South African trees and has encouraged thousands of people to discover the fascinating world of tree spotting. "My interest has not been purely academic, rather how everything fits together; the geology, climatic regions, animal and bird distribution," she says.

Other than golf (Val is a long-time member of Royal Johannesburg and Kensington), she tells us that all of her recreational time is involved with the study of trees. "I have travelled the length and breadth of our country, and loved every minute of it," says Val, who stresses the importance of the support she has received from Sappi and publishers Jacana. The Sappi project began more than 12 years ago, and several revisions are continually made to these books that have become invaluable to any tree-lover's library. They have become to those interested in trees what *Robert's Birds* have meant to keen bird watchers or 'twitchers'.

Val is hoping to compile a register of indigenous trees that exist on golf courses, which will require the help of management and committees of clubs. *GCM* appeals to anyone who has taken the trouble to do an audit of the trees on their course to contact us so work can begin. Also, any questions regarding trees that any reader might have can be directed to bogeyfree@mweb.co.za and Val will be happy to answer them. ■



PROBLEM SHOOTING

This month our tree specialist **Val Thomas** tackles problems that trees may cause on golf courses.

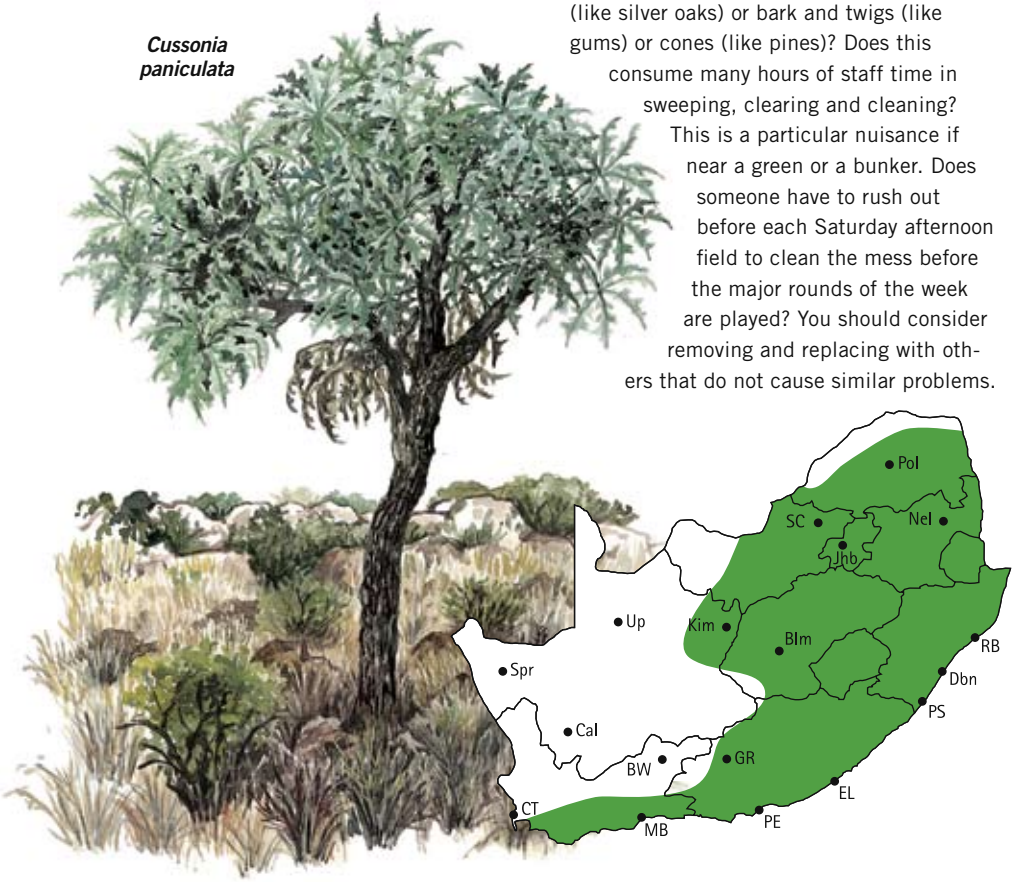
Changing anything on a golf course requires courage, energy and finance. The old maxim 'Don't fix anything that isn't broke' is generally a good rule of thumb, however, as we aim at a greener, more cost-effective and sustainable environment, we should be on the look out for trouble lurking round our courses that may have not been considered before.

My main focus is always trees, and almost always in a positive light, but in this issue, as well as in the next, we will be looking at trees from another vantage: where they are creating a problem, and how to manage it. I also want to broaden the scope to include other aspects of estate management, to encompass finance and resource-savings, as well as practical ways of reducing expensive staff time.

Below is a list of questions to ask yourself, but remember that there is no single answer to each problem that will apply to every course.

- Are there areas in which you have water-hungry alien trees close to your fairways or, worse still, alongside your greens or your dams? If so, and if you do have irrigation, you are spending money on quenching the massive thirst of gums, wattles, poplars and pines, all in an attempt to keep your actual playing areas up to standard. These trees are drinking the water that is meant to keep your grass green! If you do not have irrigation, then – unless you are situated in a very high rainfall area – it is probably even more of a problem. Your playing areas must be suffering from the water being 'stolen'. If your dams are actually your reservoirs for the dry season and there are large water-loving trees nearby, you will be losing a significant amount of liquid to those thirsty roots. Removing these trees is the very first step that you should consider when thinking about improving your course.
- Do you have large trees – again in the playing arena – which shed dry, hard leaves (like silver oaks) or bark and twigs (like gums) or cones (like pines)? Does this consume many hours of staff time in sweeping, clearing and cleaning? This is a particular nuisance if near a green or a bunker. Does someone have to rush out before each Saturday afternoon field to clean the mess before the major rounds of the week are played? You should consider removing and replacing with others that do not cause similar problems.
- Do you have trees that cast deep, day-long shade on your tee-boxes or greens? This leads to constant extra fertilising and watering in the hope of countering the effects of too little sunlight. It is a losing battle! Sometimes simply trimming these trees radically can have the desired effect. They may look a bit battle scarred for a season, but trees with a strong root system do recover well and shoot afresh. Tees often need protection from nearby golf shots, and these same trees may be serving such an important function. However each golf hole needs good grass surfaces throughout its length – and if woody plants are impacting negatively on the game, you may do well to consider removing them completely.
- Do you have any trees that are well over 50 years old and starting to look tatty? Some tree such as willows can gain added dignity once they have a few bare branches to proclaim their advancing age. This does not apply to pines and gums or wattles. You might be surprised by the response if you took a non-golfing friend around with you, and asked which trees he thinks are no longer attractive enough to warrant keeping, simply for their looks, and as part of the general ambience of the course. Obviously if the tree is strategic to the game, you have a different, far more difficult problem to solve.
- Do you have trees that have superficial, raised roots in areas where you have to mow? This would include trees such as swamp cypress (Taxodium distichum) and the fig (Ficus) genus. This is a cost to you, as your staff has to take greater care, and time, to avoid the damage that could be done to the blades and machinery. At times the cost will be direct as you replace blunt, chipped or even ruined equipment.

As usual, I like to recommend a few indigenous trees that add value to courses. All have interesting barks and are attractive trees. I have aimed to include trees that have overlapping natural distributions, so that between them they can be planted throughout most of golfing SA.



Cussonia paniculata

MOUNTAIN CABBAGE TREE

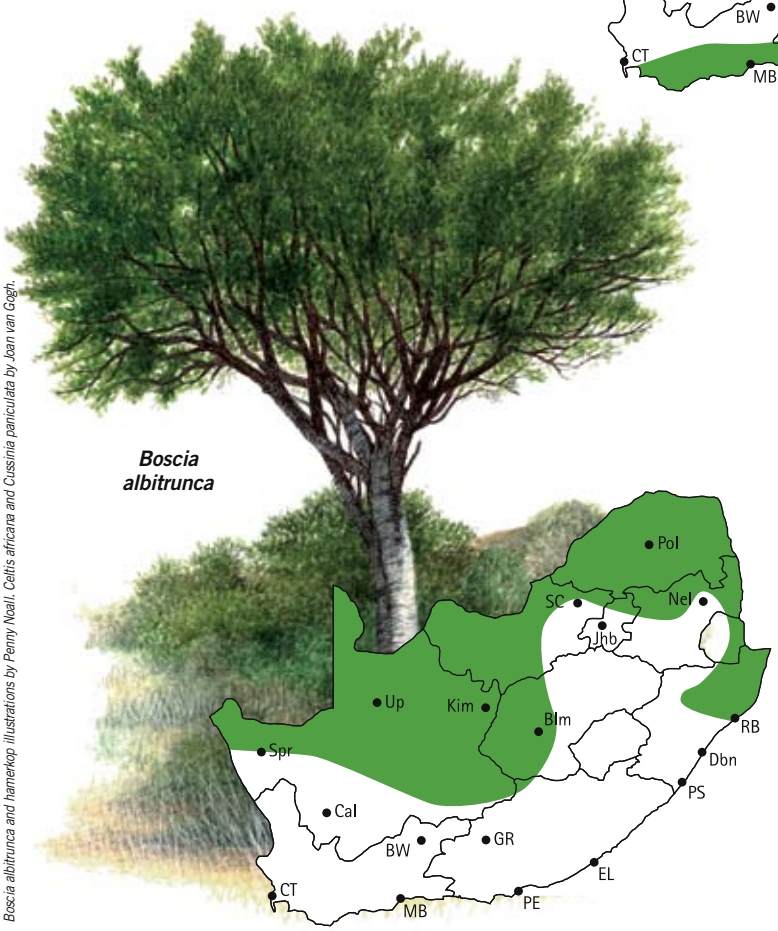
Cussonia paniculata

The mountain cabbage tree is not always evergreen, but has such an unusual shape and corky bark that it remains a fascinating tree all year round, even in the few areas where it loses its leaves for a month or so. It has a rounded moderate canopy with uniquely lobed, compound leaves. It is found in a central band through most of the country from the northern parts of the bushveld, throughout the Highveld into the Cape as far as the Langeberge, usually in mountainous or rocky places.

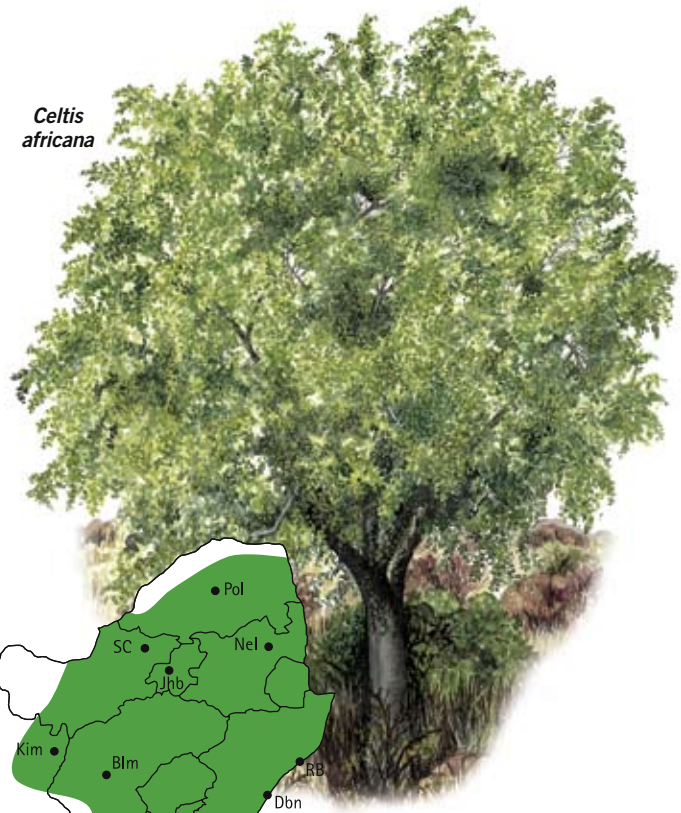
SHEPHERD'S TREE

Boscia albitrunca

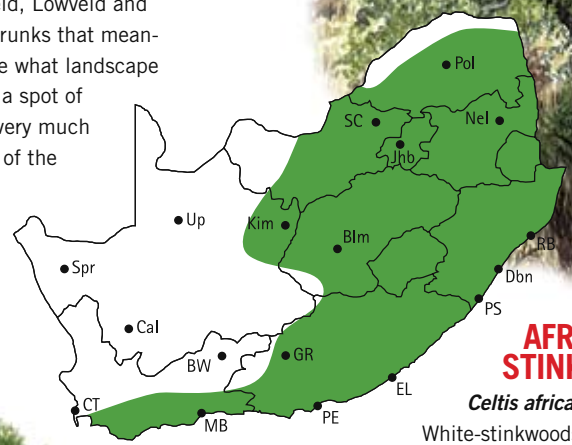
Shepherd's trees are evergreen and thrive throughout the northern and central parts of South Africa from the West Coast (Richtersveld) across the Kalahari and Karoo and into the bushveld, Lowveld and northern KwaZulu-Natal. They have pale, smooth trunks that meander into quite extraordinary shapes. These trees are what landscape artists call 'architectural' trees and they can bring a spot of unique interest on a golf course. To me, although very much smaller, they are reminiscent of the trees on some of the American West Coast courses – the very charismatic Cypresses – that grow at Pebble Beach and Harding Park.



Boscia albitrunca



Celtis africana



AFRICAN WHITE STINKWOOD

Celtis africana

White-stinkwoods are a firm SA favourite with pale, smooth trunks and bright green leaves. They are not evergreen but have an attractive branching pattern that makes them beautiful even through the winter. They do prefer plenty of water, but do not like to actually have their roots in water.

HAMERKOP

Scopus umbretta

Hamerkops are usually associated with inland water – even puddles and pools that have collected after rain. They are most often solitary, but are sometimes found in pairs or groups of four to five birds. They make massive nests with collections of hundreds of different items they have collected from nature and humans! ■



If you would like more information, get a copy of the *Sappi Tree Spotting* series or go to www.compleatgolfer.co.za and follow the *GCM* link.

Boscia albitrunca and hamerkop illustrations by Penny Noah. Celtis africana and Cussinia paniculata by Joan van Gogh.

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MANAGE YOUR EMPLOYEES RIGHTS

Employees know they have rights and support in the country's democratic system, but there are those who miss the point that with every right there is an obligation, so a clear approach to legislative compliance is paramount.

FOUR STEPS TO EFFECTIVE LABOUR RELATIONS – KEY QUESTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

■ Understand relevant legislation	**CONSTITUTION, WAGE DETERMINATION, B-BBEE LEGISLATION.** It is said that a little understanding is a dangerous thing! We often hear employees and unions say "the law says… and therefore you can't…" To which one should ask "Which law is that? Can you show me the clause?" Guideline 1: Do not respond hastily to such statements, but acknowledge, question, investigate and revert when you have the correct answer. Understanding the key elements of labour law is essential to effective club management. GMs hold a huge responsibility in this regard, but many have limited understanding in this important area. A club is a labour intensive business. Its effectiveness is inextricably linked to managing the 'human capital'. GMs need to advise committees on legislative compliance so a good working knowledge is fundamental. Effective GMs have strong back-up when it comes to clarifying labour-related matters.
■ Audit workplace conditions against all relevant legislation and good people practice	**IDENTIFY RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES.** Many clubs persist with practices based on previous legislation despite the law offering more productive working arrangements. For example, tea breaks find no place in the BCEA, there are opportunities to average hours, rostering staff flexibly, reduced overtime rates for work on Sundays and public holidays (1.5 times) where these are normal working days, no lunch breaks, overtime or public holiday remuneration for senior staff. There are many risk areas in employment that, if not identified and effectively managed, can have major consequences including criminal prosecution, fines and/or back pay. A proper investigation of compliance should identify ways to improve cost efficiency but may also require some investment in better practice. A key risk for clubs is health and safety. The Department of Labour is on the warpath to unearth non-compliance with health and safety legislation in the hospitality industry. Most clubs have poor or in fact no programme to meet these requirements.
■ Manage the biggest risks	**UNFAIR DISMISSAL.** Fairness continues to elude many employers at the CCMA, yet if performance requirements and rules are clear, a procedure for hearing the employee is in place and there is substance to the employer's allegations, dismissal may be upheld as fair. As an employer demonstrates competence in managing dismissal one may reduce CCMA applications. This is tough as employees see the CCMA as their last hope in saving their job. **HEALTH AND SAFETY.** Have risks been identified? Is there a plan to address risks? Are people designated as responsible? (If not, the committee may be criminally liable in the event of an incident.) Are designated employees trained? **HOURS OF WORK**. Non-compliance can lead to retrospective claims and fines. **EMPLOYMENT EQUITY COMPLIANCE**. The Act applies to all employers irrespective of size. Plans and reports are required for employers who have more than 50 employees. The Department of Labour has fined a number of employers with minimum fines per transgression between R500 000 and R900 000.
■ Drive key opportunities	**CLEAR RULES AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS**. Are your rules of engagement clearly drafted with the 'bad times' (when there is a dispute) in mind? Are performance standards being measured and lifted to ensure continuous improvement? Rules and performance standards need to be written, visible and (above all) managed. There is only one thing worse than having no rules at all – that is having rules that are not managed. **SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**. Does the club plan to develop all staff? People who are learning develop confidence for new challenges and seek out improvements where trusting relationships are in place. **EFFECTIVE PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT**. Leave, hours, overtime – most employers are losing in these areas. Paper-based systems, relying on people's integrity and memory simply cannot cope. Software systems will show serious abuses that are costing significant amounts. **PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND REVIEW**. Most people like to be considered successful. If realistic performance measures are set people will work towards them. Feedback/review clarifies the importance of the measures and personalises the importance of individual feedback. A simple approach that empowers managers and staff is key to ensure this key opportunity is effectively managed.

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GCM's Preferred Supplier, GolfTimeSA, an online golf booking system, has a one-stop solution to cover the handicapping and bookings needs of clubs nationwide.

Since inception in 2005 when GolfTimeSA introduced its online golf booking technology and associated club systems, it has grown steadily with a strategic approach of growing at a sustainable pace with club and service delivery excellence at the centre of the business. GolfTimeSA has built a solid base with good market penetration, especially in Gauteng, while at the same time the business is now establishing a national footprint.

InTouch Point of Sale is a pervasive point of sale product and service provider in the retail and hospitality industries. InTouch was established in 1996 and has a sizeable footprint in the South African and international golf markets.

GolfTimeSA and InTouch have integrated technologies to provide best-of-breed product offerings to deliver comprehensive and integrated solutions that cover the business needs of golf clubs.

The combined product offering is delivered as a total end-to-end solution that includes:

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- Club electronic booking control
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- Customer relationship management solutions (mail-shots, SMS communication)
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- Corporate event management
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- Handicap management as an approved handicap service provider
- Club handicap kiosk (touch screen)
- Central server that will integrate with the new SAGA central server once ready
- Member loyalty management
- Cashless solutions

GolfTimeSA's latest technology additions include a comprehensive handicap management solution. GolfTimeSA's local development team started with the development of a comprehensive handicap management module soon after its appointment as a handicap service provider by the SAGA in 2007 and this product is now ready for launch. Our handicap management solution includes patent-pending technology that is aimed at improving the integrity of golfer handicaps with unique score verification processes.

The integrated solutions from GolfTimeSA and InTouch are delivered as a one-stop solution that delivers a single point of contact for solution implementation services and support total solution delivery:

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- Financing solutions for capital equipment, eg hardware financing

GolfTimeSA is proven technology, with more than 35 clubs and 20 000 registered golfers using the system – concluding well over 250 000 online bookings. ■

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For further information please contact Irma De Beer, national sales manager of GolfTimeSA:

- **E-mail: irma@golftimesa.co.za**
- **Mobile: 082 904 3285**

SALARIES IN THE GOLF AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Are you paying your staff above or below the current industry average?

As of July 2009 the hospitality sector released minimum wages for hospitality staff across South Africa up to and including June 2010. This minimum wage determination was gazetted by the minister of labour. However, more recently, on 25 August 2009, the Department of Labour gazetted a further investigation to review wages and conditions of employment within the hospitality sector. We will publish the department's findings as soon as they are released.

MINIMUM WAGES FOR EMPLOYERS WITH 10 OR LESS EMPLOYEES

MINIMUM RATE FOR THE PERIOD 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008			MINIMUM RATE FOR THE PERIOD 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009			MINIMUM RATE FOR THE PERIOD 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010		
R.p.m.	**R.p.w.**	**R.p.h.**	**R.p.m.**	**R.p.w.**	**R.p.h.**	**R.p.m.**	**R.p.w.**	**R.p.h.**
R1 480.00	R341.60	R7.59	R1 659.08	R382.93	R8.51	R1 843.23	R425.43	R9.45

MINIMUM WAGES FOR EMPLOYERS MORE THAN 10 EMPLOYEES

MINIMUM RATE FOR THE PERIOD 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008			MINIMUM RATE FOR THE PERIOD 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009			MINIMUM RATE FOR THE PERIOD 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010		
R.p.m.	**R.p.w.**	**R.p.h.**	**R.p.m.**	**R.p.w.**	**R.p.h.**	**R.p.m.**	**R.p.w.**	**R.p.h.**
R1 650	R380.80	R8.46	R1 849.65	R426.88	R9.48	R2 054.96	R474.26	R10.53

The CPIX rate used to calculate the minimum wage increase applicable from 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010 is the rate that was available 6 weeks prior to the increase becoming effective, which is the March 2009 CPI (excluding Owners Equivalent Rent) rate of 9.10% plus 2%. The minimum wage increase will therefore increase by 11.10%.

AVERAGE HOSPITALITY SALARIES PER MONTH THROUGHOUT SOUTH AFRICA IN 2009

** Salaries may vary depending on geographical location, size of property and star rating.*

- **FOOD AND BEVERAGE/BANQUETING MANAGERS**
  R8 025 to R17 700
- **WAITING STAFF**
  R2 054 to R3 240
- **HEAD CHEF**
  R12 000 to R18 750
- **MAINTENANCE MANAGERS**
  R11 750 to R20 000

AVERAGE GOLF SALARIES AS OF 2009

Courtesy of Minette Wallis at www.golfpeople.co.za

- **GREENKEEPER**
  R20 000 to R40 000 pm depending on experience and the club or estate
- **GOLF DIRECTOR**
  R30 000 to R35 000 pm plus benefits of the pro shop (depending on the club and arrangement made)
- **ASSISTANT GOLF PRO**
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TORO'S NEW 14-BLADE REEL

combining productivity and playability



Toro introduced its revolutionary new 14-blade reel at *GCM's* Western Cape Workshop, an innovation that promises healthier, smoother greens – even if they are cut at tournament heights

As trends in golf suggest that the faster a green measures on the stimpmeter the better, there is always the danger of burning, scalping or ripping the grass blades. The relationship between reel speed, mowing speed and the height of cut is important, and the 14-blade reel promises to produce a smoother cut that will not compromise the health of a green, even at cutting heights that are lower than usual.

TORO SUGGESTS THAT THERE ARE 14 REASONS TO CONSIDER THE 14-BLADE REEL:

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- More blades provide a smoother, sharper, more consistent cut
- The new blade guarantees fewer stragglers and therefore smoother putting surfaces
- Saves money by reducing chemical usage at lower cutting heights
- Results in a faster and truer ball roll
- Your greens will be more challenging for golfers
- Provides an optimal combination of reel speed and blades for best cutting performance
- Compatible with all Toro Greensmaster Flex 18 and 21 mowers
- No need for reel speed adjustments
- Allows you to raise the height of cut slightly for healthier, stress-free greens without compromising ball speeds
- Your course can be tournament ready whenever you're ready
- A new love for your Stimpmeter
- Economical solution for existing Toro Greensmaster Flex Mowers
- Golfers will be speechless for a change ■

- **A video presentation can be found at www.toro.com or contact Smith Turf**





CONSIDER IT DONE

In the short time that Tony Louw has taken over as GM of Roodepoort Country Club, he has shown a determination to make members and visitors feel rather special, and he will not rest until his new club becomes a serious candidate for *Compleat Golfer* 5-Star Golf Experience status.

When Tony Louw decided to leave his home town Cape Town and accept the position of general manager at Roodepoort Country Club, he fully understood the challenges that faced him. The West Rand club, although having a large, functional clubhouse, and an excellent layout situated in an area that is surrounded by burgeoning residential development, was not exactly booming. Membership retention was showing worrying signs of dipping, and the club was rumoured to be in dire financial straights. These rumours were exaggerated, possibly fuelled by embellishments by competing golf clubs, but the truth is that Roodepoort badly needed a shake-up – and this happened.

The club's captain Rolph Gieske tells *GCM* that he and his committee consider themselves fortunate to have secured the services of Tony Louw. "We had been without the services of a manager for some months earlier in the year and staff morale and the general atmosphere at the club was at a low point," he says. "Tony took on the challenge and managed to turn this around within the first few weeks. It is amazing what he managed to achieve within so short a time. Working closely with him has been an absolute pleasure; any ideas or decisions taken by the committee are implemented with a simple statement: 'Consider it done'. To top it all he's not too bad a golfer either."

"Not too bad a golfer" is something of an understatement – the man who played his junior golf at Rondebosch was once one of the best amateurs in the country. He represented his province at every level, and was a natural choice for international honours. Once he was awarded his Springbok blazer he became a

EXTRA SPECIAL TIMES, EXTRA SPECIAL SCOTCH

Not for sale to persons under the age of 18



Roodepoort was the first course in South Africa to replace its greens with bent surfaces that were grown off site, which proved to be a great success.

key member of a side that was loaded with talent – certainly one of the best teams ever. Although later his career on the pro tour may have been something of an anticlimax, he has now made his mark in club management.

In the short time he has been at Roodepoort, Louw has spruced up the general appearance of the clubhouse, embarking on a thorough spring-cleaning and where needed new coats of paint were applied. But more importantly, there has been a marked improvement in staff morale and by instituting systems of staff motivation from the bottom up, every aspect of the operation has been improved. "For example, we have started having a monthly braai with the course staff," says Tony. "Each month we recognise one of the workers as the 'Best Team Player', and issuing certificates to deserving candidates has paid dividends. Our course superintendent Stoffel van Rooyen has seen amazing results from this – he says that it seems like his work force has doubled."

The front-of-house operation has been given a shot in the arm by various incentive schemes for staff being implemented, and the members and visitors have responded. "We have overhauled the systems and everyone that works here has clearly defined goals," says Louw. "We all understand the importance of every member and visitor feeling that they are welcome, and it is our job to make sure that every aspect of their experience is enjoyable," he says. "Everyone in the industry knows that people come to their club to relax and have a good time, and it is our job to ensure that they do."

Almost overnight the change in this club was dramatic. "We have had several new members join and our food and beverage revenue has improved unbelievably – our happy hours have been a huge hit and there is now a feeling of community within the club," says Louw. Friday-night pasta evenings are well supported, and Sunday lunches with a full buffet have also proven to be popular. During times when many clubs are feeling the pinch with reduced rounds and a drop in bar takings, Roodepoort is bucking the trend, but Louw is not taking all the credit for this transformation. "Our management team is really top notch – our financial operation is well looked after by Johan Erasmus, Wendy Ross-Marsh runs our HR department, Charles Culbert has his finger on the pulse when it comes to food and beverage, and our director of golf Charles Erasmus and his assistant Helgaard van Niekerk are passionate about their work. Head professional Gavin Drummond runs one of the best pro shops in the country, and everything is now in place for Roodepoort Country Club to take its place among South Africa's premier facilities," he says.

With the experience gained during his time at The Lost City and at Atlantic Beach, Tony Louw has brought enthusiasm and a sense of purpose to a club that deserves to be recognised as one of the best. "I am confident that we will see our course rise in the rankings, and we are aiming at achieving a *Compleat Golfer* 5-Star Golf Experience Award – with the support that I have had from the committee, and the commitment from all of our staff, there is no reason why we cannot challenge the best," he says. ■



BELL'S EXTRA SPECIAL OLD SCOTCH WHISKY

Not for sale to persons under the age of 18

AT THE SAGA, it is business unusual in 2010

A desire for continuity in decision-making and the need to meet the challenges facing sports administrators in today's world are the principal driving forces behind the South African Golf Association's (SAGA) decision to implement a business plan for the first time.

In September 2009, the SAGA's national executive committee formally adopted the business plan.

"The business plan, which was more than two years in the making and takes effect in 2010, is going to change the way amateur golf is administered in South Africa for the better", explained Enver Hassen, president of the SAGA.

"The SAGA's constituted decision-making mechanism is driven largely by its elected office bearers. With elections taking place annually and with the maximum permissible term of office being two years, we have found that continuity in decision-making and strategic direction is almost impossible. This has a direct impact on the ability of the SAGA to deal with matters that require a long-term strategy. The business plan will address this problem. Cornerstones of the plan are the employment of a bigger staff complement, with greater responsibilities, and an administrative leadership structure that will be independent of the outcome of the SAGA's annual election process."

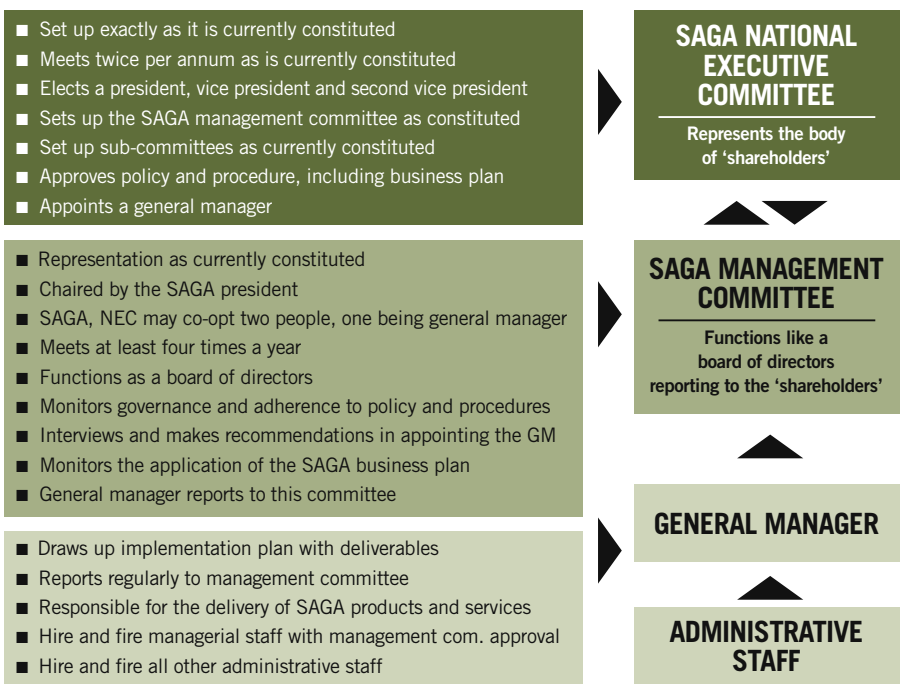
HOW DOES THE SAGA CURRENTLY OPERATE?

The SAGA is currently run by a national executive committee which meets twice a year, in March and September. During the last meeting of each year, the SAGA's annual general meeting takes place where office bearers are elected.

Areas of responsibility of the SAGA are separated into eight sub-committees. Representatives of the national executive committee are then seconded to these sub-committees in order to attend to matters that relate to each.

These sub-committees along with the national executive meet and take decisions which are then implemented by the SAGA's full-time administration team of Bruce Younge, the executive director, Neil Homann, assistant executive director, and Sam Jackson, administration secretary.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE



HOW WILL THE SAGA OPERATE IN THE FUTURE?

The SAGA's objectives will continue to be determined by the SAGA national executive as it is constituted, along the lines of a body representing the interests of 'shareholders'. The national executive committee will appoint a management committee which will function along similar lines to that of a board of directors. The person who will be responsible for driving the new business plan will be a general manager who will be appointed by the SAGA national executive committee but reports into the management committee, as outlined in the illustration to the left.

HOW WILL THE NEW ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE BE MADE UP?

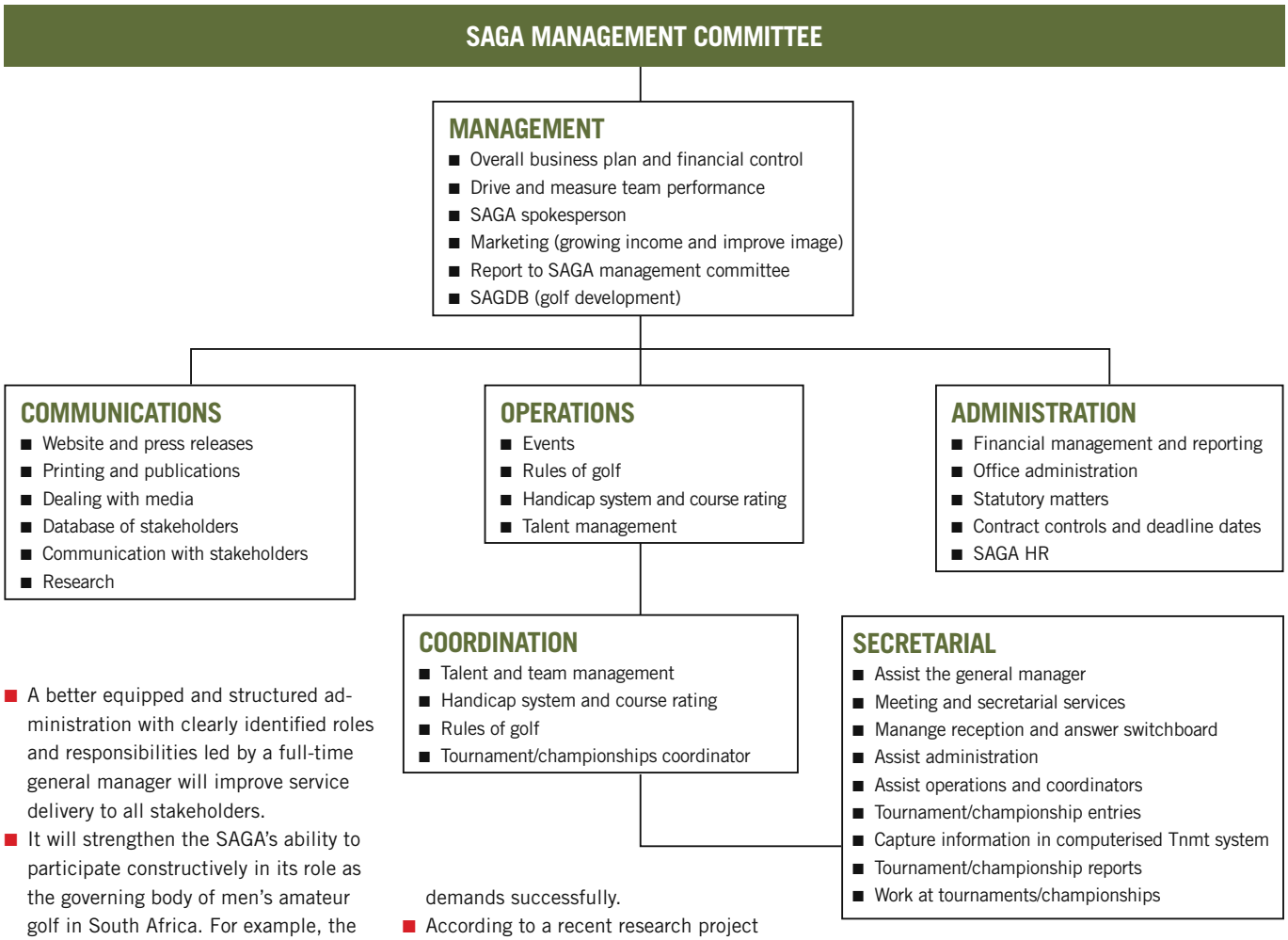
The illustration on the opposite page shows the functional structure of the new administration.

"We will, as revenue permits, end up with a staff complement of 12 people," explained Enver Hassen.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR AMATEUR GOLF IN SOUTH AFRICA?

"There are a number of benefits arising out of this far-reaching decision," Hassen pointed out. He highlighted the following:

FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE



- A better equipped and structured administration with clearly identified roles and responsibilities led by a full-time general manager will improve service delivery to all stakeholders.
- It will strengthen the SAGA's ability to participate constructively in its role as the governing body of men's amateur golf in South Africa. For example, the organisation is not currently a respected source of information on the sport. We intend building a comprehensive and accurate database of all unions and golf clubs to get to understand our market better, to serve stakeholders in the sport, etc.
- The administration of amateur golf is currently almost entirely reliant on the income from affiliated golfers, through their annual subscription to the SAGA. In a country like New Zealand, the national association receives only 54% of its annual income from the affiliated golfer. In the interests of the long-term future of the sport the SAGA needs to reduce its reliance on this source of income to similar levels of that in New Zealand. To do this we need to exploit commercial opportunities around properties belonging to the SAGA. In order to do this we will require an infrastructure that will meet these demands successfully.
- According to a recent research project conducted by the Professional Golfers Association of South Africa, the direct and indirect economic impact the sport has on this country's economy in 2008 was estimated to be R58.4 billion, more than the estimated impact the FIFA World Cup is expected to deliver. It is therefore critical for the future of the amateur sport that it has an administration that has the capacity to participate actively (as opposed to reactively) as a regulatory body in this environment to the benefit of both the sport and its stakeholders.

"Australia, New Zealand, Wales and a host of other countries have all, over the past number of years, successfully implemented a business plan. We therefore are not doing pioneering work in which there are inherent risks, we are only following best practices," commented Hassen.

For many years the SAGA has been perceived to be distant and out of touch with golfers, organisations and businesses related to the amateur sport. "In fact, in some instances we are better known for our green jackets than the work we do," quipped Hassen.

With the introduction of a more responsible delivery process, which the business plan is expected to produce, that perception of the SAGA appears set to change forever. ■

SOUTH AFRICAN GOLF ASSOCIATION

DON'T APPLY

Lloyd Martindale, general manager of George Golf Club and CMASA executive committee member takes a look at the 'lighter side' of club management

Interviewing a potential CEO or general manager for your golf club is always going to be a difficult exercise. The club will ask itself:

- Is this the right person?
- Will he/she stick around for a few years?
- Are we asking the correct questions?

If you are entering the realm of club life for the first time as a potential CEO/general manager from commercial business, you need to go through the 10-point quiz outlined below before you make a firm decision to follow club life as a chosen career path. The same premise applies to an existing committee member who believes this position is a 'walk in the park'. Granted the committee member may be passionate about the club and may have been successful in his own line of business. But is he/she the right person for the position?

Probably not, and this is no offense to the person. He/she may have been doing it for the right reasons, but doing prizegivings once a week and sitting at a monthly committee meeting is a far cry from running a multi-million-rand business, where you literally have hundreds of bosses (your well-meaning members).

Bearing this in mind I would like to pose a list of questions that well-meaning committee members and prospective new entrants into the world of club management should read before they consider putting their name down for the position of CEO or



Lloyd cooks up a his legendary *potjiekos* at a recent *GCM* workshop held at George Golf Club.

CMASA
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general manager at their club:

1. Do you mind working 12-hour days? Sometimes seven days a week. If you do – don't apply.

2. Does it bother you if you have to listen to suggestions all day, every day on how you should be running the club from 'well-meaning' members. If it does – don't apply.

3. Do you mind 'well-meaning' members telling you how they used to do things a certain way when they were in business. If you do – don't apply.

4. Would you get irritated with 'well-meaning' members if they constantly tell you how well the club down the road is managed. If you would – don't apply.

5. Are you capable of making policy decisions that don't necessarily suit your friends (not that you have any friends any more). If you are not – don't apply.

6. Do you mind if your current handicap of five goes up to a 15 in the first year on the job as you only play once a month – if you are lucky – and even then the said 'well-meaning' members say, "Look! The manager is playing golf again!" If you do – don't apply.

7. Would you mind if, in your second year as manager, you only played golf once every three months because you get fed up with 'well-meaning' members that you do occasionally play golf with saying, "Ah... Now I have you on the course, I would like to show you a few ideas I have to improve the layout." If you would – don't apply.

8. Would you get upset if your committee wants to do your wage comparison with Renosterspruit Country Club instead of a leading club. If you would – don't apply.

9. If at a committee meeting you are just about to do your big presentation on capex projects over the next five years and one of your 'well-meaning' committee members interrupts you to complain about there not being salt-and-vinegar chips in the bar last Tuesday. He/she further adds that this wouldn't happen at such-and-such-a-club down the road. If you can't handle this – don't apply.



Lloyd and his right-hand lady Sandra Lennox proudly hold the award for the Most Popular Course in the Western Cape presented to them by *Compleat Golfer.*

10. If it bothers you that one of your 'well-meaning' members insists on telling you how you should be cutting the grass on the course using his extensive knowledge from the experienced he has gained mowing his 10-square-metre back garden – don't apply.

If you read the above and it made you smile and nod, you are probably a club manager and we (club managers) are not made – we are created. You are either suited to this business or you are not – and there is no middle ground.

And even bearing all of the above stresses and strains of everyday life at a club, I wouldn't want to be anything else.

- Who wouldn't choose to work in such a beautiful, green environment and, when the stresses and strains of all of the above get to you, you take a walk on the 'wild side' and unwind?
- Who wouldn't choose to work with a vibrant, maybe sometimes disgruntled membership? The pleasure of satisfying some of their needs outweighs the negative connotations attached thereto.
- Who wouldn't choose to work in a sector where the managers are willing to share their ups and downs and offer advice whenever asked?
- Who wouldn't choose to work in a sector that has the backing of CMASA, who are committed and knowledgeable in all club matters?
- Who wouldn't want to work in an industry where your involvement in course improvement projects is so stressful but rewarding; where you can look back at a tee, green or bunker years later and think, 'I did that – and I did it bloody well'; where you organise events that go off like a well-oiled machine, the members are happy and the tills are ringing?
- Who wouldn't want to work in an industry that is constantly changing and were each day you can learn something new if you are open-minded enough to listen?
- Who wouldn't want to work in an industry where, through your input and knowledge, your club has succeeded where other have sadly failed?
- Who wouldn't want to work in an industry that isn't considered 'work', but rather a lifestyle? ■

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- Suståne 8-2-4 (All natural greens, tees and fairways)
- Suståne 10-2-10+Fe (Greens grade with methylene urea and iron chelate)
- Suståne 12-4-8 (Tees and fairways)
- Suståne 18-1-8+Fe (tees and fairways with MU and PCSCU)

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KwaZulu-Natal: Barker Turf ◆ Gary Barker ◆ 082 891 7554
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WINE & GOLF

The CEO of De Zalze **Dave Hansen** hosted the *GCM* Western Cape Workshop and also delivered an entertaining and informative talk on wine. He stresses the importance of being able to offer your customer something better than the 'boxed' variety.

Is it wine and golf or golf and wine? For most golfers it is the golf first and then the wine – or is it?

I have been an avid wine lover for a few decades and hope to continue for some time to come. We are blessed in South Africa to have easy access to some of the finest wines in the world. As a result of the vision and craftsmanship of generations of hard-working wine farmers, we have products that are winning world acclaim alongside our famous golfing sons.

We have a great reputation for both wine and golf, and to me wine and golf go hand in hand like golf and greens or rivers and water. Life would be unbearable without any of them. It's unfortunate that you can find great golf courses and great golf clubs, but can your can rarely find great or even good wines at most of these.

On a recent visit to Cape Town, *GCM* asked me to put a few pointers together that may assist in getting clubs to look a little further than 'box wine' when looking at ways to generate interest and sales. I know that many of my fellow club managers do offer good wines, however I fear that there are many other club managers who do not expose their members and guests to an 'appropriate' wine experience. Considering that the world is going to be descending on South Africa for the 2010 World Cup, and considering that the majority of golfers around the world that can afford golf are also the ones likely to remember the venues where they received really good service and hospitality, it pays to beef up the quality of beverage delivery. Golfers enjoy wine and good food!

WINE SELECTION

When it comes to the selection of wines one needs to be careful when selecting wines that will suit the occasion/situation. There is no need to try to select big-ticket wines; there are numerous what we would call 'quaffing' wines, and these are the ones to target. (Quaff = to drink with merriment and gusto!) Wines in 99 percent of golf clubs would be consumed '*après* golf' on the terrace or in the bar/lounge, and therefore they need to be the cultivars or varietals that most of our golfers drink and, most importantly, they need to be affordable! Of all the decisions that we have to make this is an easy one and there are many vendors more than willing to assist in this process by offering wine tastings and 'promos' – after all, the so-called 'global crunch' has affected all industries. All you have to do is engage with your local liquor merchant or find the wine vendors in your area. Using a guide like the John Platter guide will also help.

I would recommend the following wines for any golf club:

WHITES:

- Sauvignon Blanc – by far the most popular white wine, with numerous options
- Chenin Blanc – a very popular cultivar and an easy drinker

REDS: Any combination of these four or all of them! Reds get better with age.

- Cabernet Sauvignon – considered by many to be the king of red varieties
- Merlot – one of the most popular and fashionable reds
- Pinotage – a distinctive SA varietal, a charm of its own
- Shiraz – outside of SA and Australia it is known as Syrah, originating from Shiraz in Persia

I would also always recommend having a few bottles of 'Cap Classique' in the bar for those special occasions and celebrations like a hole-in-one. We have many available and they are certainly comparable with some of the best Champagnes from France at a fraction of the price. Ditch the *vin douxs* (*kopseer*!) for our own bottle-fermented 'real deal'.

PRESENTATION

Presentation and service in the hospitality business (which includes golf) is the differentiator and once again it is the attention to the small details that can turn an ordinary experience into an occasion. The days of the Paris wine goblet and the Willy glass belong in the past. Life is too short to have to drink out of these boring receptacles. With a little effort any establishment can easily 'upgrade' to a 'business-class' experience by simply purchasing a better quality of glass. There is no validity to the excuse that they break easily and cost too much – it's all about care and attention (ie management). Most respectable European beer brands have their own high-quality glasses made which carry their logos and drinking a reasonable quaffing wine out of a good glass really turns the ordinary into something special. Anyone who has experienced the level of service offered by Pilsner Urquell with its draft beer will testify to the quality of the experience.

PRICING

This is a most important consideration and most hospitality venues get it wrong. When dealing with serving wines by the bottle or the glass we need to ensure we don't 'kill the goose' so to speak by being driven by percentages and margins. Concentrate on contribution. Pricing wines too high will result in them staying on the shelf. Getting it right encourages sales. I have always maintained that we never work at more than a 50-percent margin or a 100-percent mark-up on affordable 'quaffing' wines and reduce these expectations on higher-priced products. We should not penalise a customer for good taste and expect a R500-plus profit on a bottle Dom Perignon and also be satisfied if he drank a bottle of Graça where we possibly only make R25! The white and red wines mentioned above are all available throughout SA for between R25 to R50 a bottle at cost and should sell in our golf establishments at prices between R50 to R100 (in a decent glass). Go on, improve your image, and make your customers happy! ■

Feed your turf what it needs – THE LOGICAL APPROACH

Talborne's **Pierre Kotze** has been involved in golf club governance for some time, as well as being a low-handicap golfer. Talborne is recognised as being the leading supplier of certified, quality organic fertilizers, and he spells out the obvious advantages of a thorough soil analysis followed by the application of the required, eco-friendly material.

I have heard it said that you spend 80 percent of your daylight (waking) hours at work; to me that means you better be sure you enjoy what you're doing for a living or you're in for a miserable life. Notwithstanding the fact that every job has its challenges (and irritations) I can truly say that in my line of work I come into contact with some really nice people while promoting a product I am passionate about. It is of course an obvious advantage that I am also an avid golfer of reasonable ability.

My golfing and business travels have taken me onto many of South Africa's golf courses, both up-market and ordinary and, admitting now that making generalisations can be dangerous, I make the following observations pertaining to the environmentally friendly practices in general and course fertilization programmes in particular that I have encountered:

1) THE 'PANEL OF EXPERTS'. It is unfortunate but true that many clubs' management and greens staff have to operate under ever-changing committees, often dominated by strong personalities intent on 'leaving legacies' rather than serving the clubs best interests. Most times many of these individuals have neither the technical expertise nor management and hands-on experience for which they originally employed these staff members.

It is amazing to me that there are clubs that would employ (and pay for) experienced, qualified and competent staff, sometimes even contractors and consultants, and then take little or no cognisance of what they say or recommend! Very strange, but very true. Even stranger and more disturbing is when these employees and or service providers are constantly undermined and unfairly blamed for all manner of problems.

2) REACTIVE MANAGEMENT TENDENCIES. Competencies aside, the rotational nature of most committees also means that long-term vision and structured planning is often sacrificed at the expense of 'getting something done in our term' on committee. There aren't many clubs that I know of that have planned quite as far ahead as Royal Johannesburg and Kensington has with respect to its tree planting programme. Irrespective of personalities and the comings and goings of committees, they are ensuring that future generations enjoy an ever-improving golf course. In instances where there is no long-term plan mapped out with respect to the club's activities, things tend to happen regulated by a combination of the following questions: What is the biggest emergency? What does the dominate personality want done first or what can the club afford right now? I know of 'small' clubs that have managed to effect enormous changes, and through planning and budgeting, have managed to do so at no extra cost to their members. The effect of these changes can be further maximised by identifying the optimal spend using the well known 'Pareto Rule' which states that 20 percent of the effort gets you 80 percent of the benefit.

I have mentioned the previous two generalisations as they regulate the underlying thinking which leads to the following problems:

3) SOIL SAMPLING. A large number of golf courses do not take intermittent, let alone regular, soil samples to determine what is required by their soils. Fertilization programmes then become 'spray and pray' affairs whereby everything is applied in more-than-adequate amounts to make sure that hopefully everything that could be required is there just in case.

As discussed at length in previous articles, this amounts to wasted money (and time) especially when using chemical fertilizers with their high leach profiles. At least when using organic fertilizers (with their low leaching profiles) the soils reserves are replenished and built up by any excess nutritional applications. The bottom line, however, is that either way, it



Lush green turf, as seen here at Evergreen's Turf Show, is what every club would want, but it takes comprehensive soil analysis and the correct application of whatever the soil needs to achieve this.

is not cost effective to feed what is not missing from the soil.

The regular application of organic fertilizers builds up the nutritional reserves in the soil to the required levels after which fertilization programmes based on soil sample results need only replace what has been used by the plant. By definition, this means that at worst money is not being wasted applying unnecessary nutrition and, at best, the fertilizer spend is eventually being reduced.

4) THE COST OF THE VISUAL IMPACT. Alas, many greens superintendents, contractors and/or consultants are evaluated based on how much they spent to get the course looking a certain way and not on the state of the soil. As explained, it is possible to reduce the fertilizer spend over time by first building up soil reserves and then replenishing only the 'used' nutritional portion from time to time.

A more worrying (and wasteful) fertilizing rationale that I have come across is the repeated application of high nitrogen content fertilizers which have the short-term effect of 'greening' up the grass without contributing to general plant health and vitality. Leaf areas become soft and prone to disease while root development slows and eventually stops. Even scarier is when foliar applications of similar products are applied with the same short-term objectives in mind. Obviously these techniques mean that things are not always as they seem – in fact, they are often nothing like they seem.

Frankly speaking, if a man is being judged on the basis of 'how much have you spent to get the course looking like this?' and his livelihood is on the line, it's not surprising that these practices prevail. In an effort to enumerate the cost of an organic fertilization programme against a commensurate synthetic programme, Talborne has, in conjunction and with the help of Mr Dave Kirby of TopTurf, embarked on a set of controlled tests at Euphoria, Val de Grace, Krugersdorp GC, Oubaai and The Links.

Soil samples were taken at the start of the trial, all applications will be costed and recorded until the final soil samples are taken at the end of the trial period. It is envisaged that the first phase of the trial will last at least one growing season and future articles in this publication will deal with the results as they come to hand. In next month's issue of *GCM*, we will explain the methodology of the organic versus chemical tests, and during the course of the monitoring process we will be examining the colour and vitality of the turf being tested. The soil will also be tested at regular intervals. The long-term results should clearly show which method of fertilization is superior when measured using an overall holistic and environmental impact approach ■

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PYE BREDENKAMP

A wealth of experience and a heap of common sense

The *Turf Manager's Manager Manual*, a publication produced by Pye Seeds/Nkosi Turf, has been a handy tool for anyone in the golf business, soi t made sense that the information contained in this publication should also be in *GCM*. Considering that our readers are much the same people, in the coming issues we will be featuring a range of different topics supplied by Pye Bredenkamp and his team.

John Victor Bredenkamp, better known as Pye to his countless friends in the turf industry, has secured his place in the history of golf in South Africa. It was he who first popularised bent grass in this part of the world, something that was probably inevitable. But it was Pye who travelled to the US, made numerous contacts in the turf industry there, and embarked on a mission to learn as much as he could about the most modern turfgrasses and their maintenance.

Killarney Golf Club can claim to have been the first that, at the insistence of course architect Robert Trent Jones who redesigned the original layout, planted what was then a revolutionary new fine-leafed grass in the early 1970s. The problems trying to maintain this temperamental grass were legion as nobody in South Africa then understood what treatments were required to keep this grass healthy. That the Americans had mastered the art and science involved in cultivating this grass was obvious, but in the Southern African environment it seemed to fare less well and there were those that maintained that Penncross would never thrive here. Many believed that our climate was unsuitable, but since then, particularly with greens being built to USGA specifications, bent greens in South Africa have become the rule rather than the exception.

Pye was elected as captain of Randpark Golf Club in 1972, and as chairman of greens, he and his committee also decided in those early days that bent grass, with its superior surface, was the preferred cladding for their greens. In association with



Pye's warehouse in Germiston is filled not only with an array of seeds, but also numerous items of turf equipment. Here he poses with one of his PlanetAir Aerators.

Gus Gouws, who later became a business partner of Pye's and is well known in the seed business, the conversion to bent went ahead. Pye had already become something of a grass fundi, and had become the turf advisor to what was then the South African Golf Union. By joining the American Greenkeepers Association, and undertaking several trips to the United States, Pye kept abreast of the latest advancements in turf management and the development of various strains of seed, and is today a well-respected and knowledgeable exponent of the cutting-edge technologies involved in every facet of the business of establishing and maintaining golf courses. Turf agronomy has become more than just a business to Pye – it has almost become an obsession, and he certainly knows his stuff.

"I was fortunate to meet Warren Bidwell, who became a good friend of mine," says Pye. "Warren, who was the turf advisor to Penn State College – one of the foremost research centres in the US – introduced me to several of the leading professors in the business, and I learned a lot," he says. During the 1970s and '80s, I attended many courses in the States; learning is a life-long process, and I have always considered it to be a duty to pass on whatever information one can."

Pye became a much-sought-after consultant, and over the years he estimates that he has helped more than 200 golf clubs in South Africa. His phone never seems to stop ringing with queries ranging from someone wanting to build a green in their garden, to large construction companies wanting to order seed. He is constantly contacted by people wanting advice on sports fields, those at large stadiums and the local school. He was also the first person in South Africa to import specialised equipment for seeding, aeration and deep hollow-tyning grassed surfaces. He also constructed a bent grass bowling green for the Belgravia club – the first of its kind which was highly successful and a revelation to bowlers.

Pye could be described as someone who believes in common sense backed up by sound science, and he has a way of simplifying what could be complicated solutions to problems. "I was told by a very astute man, an expert in the turf business, that one should concentrate on the roots – if the roots are healthy and fed what they require, that is half the battle," he says. This may sound simple, but of course it isn't. Like all knowledgeable people in the turf business, Pye insists that a comprehensive soil analysis should be conducted and the results carefully studied before attempting to rectify whatever deficiencies might exist, and he has the hard-earned experience to know how to proceed from there. Trial and error is not Pye's style, and he is all too familiar with those who can fall into the trap of 'killing with kindness'. In his book there is only way; the right way.



One of the most exciting parts of attending Pye's training sessions is when he hands out the certificates to course workers who passed the test.

Over the many years that Pye has been in the business, his enthusiasm has never waned, and during an illness that landed him in hospital, he lay thinking about what needed to be done and he came up with the idea of starting a series of training sessions for course workers at clubs around the country. The first of these were conducted at Benoni Country Club and, at the time of writing, his assistant Jenny Liebenberg was in Zimbabwe training Royal Harare's course staff. "Motivating staff and being able to delegate with peace of mind comes with the experience of working with people, but particularly course superintendents, many of whom have been self-taught, should realise that generally course workers are not well rewarded for the work they do, and the difference between them performing well or not could depend on whether they are treated with respect and kindness," he warns.

During the next few months we will be covering the identification of pests and diseases in turfgrass, soil analysis and fertilization, maintenance of equipment, and also with Pye's help, general tips which we are confident our readers will find helpful.

COURSES ATTENDED BY PYE BREDENKAMP INCLUDE:

- Destructive Turf Insects conducted by Dr Harry Niemczky
- Turf Grass Botany and Physiology, conducted by Dr James Beard (Texas A&M)
- Turf Grass Disease and Identification conducted by Prof. Houston Couch (Virginia Polytech University)
- Rob Nancarrow (Georgia State University)
- Golf Course Budgeting and Forecasting, American Chartered Accounts
- Golf Renovations and Construction conducted by different leading course architects ■

■ **Pye Bredenkamp can be contacted at:**
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Secrets to SUCCESSFUL UPGRADES

Haphazard upgrade projects may result in short-term gains, but long-term pains. Therefore, it pays to plan golf course upgrades properly writes **Vic van Eck,** Turftek's managing director.

There are many advantages to upgrading a golf course, but ultimately it is all about improving playability and remaining competitive. To really harness these benefits, proper planning is essential. These are some of the things that should be taken into account when embarking on an upgrade project.

STICK TO A PLAN

A golf course audit, conducted by a golf course architect, should form the foundation of a golf course's long-term plan. Such a plan gives a golf course an end goal and continuity, especially if you consider that golf course committees change every year or two and that they may have differing personal preferences. It should be reviewed annually and any upgrades should fit into this plan.

SET PRIORITIES

It is often impossible to address all the issues vying for attention at a golf course in one go. That's why it makes sense to prioritise items. Issues raised in the golf course audit can be compared against complaints by members and visitors to establish the most pressing matters. In fact, course feedback is one of the most important factors when setting priorities.

The other crucial factor is cost. Therefore an accurate, comprehensive scope of work with a bill of quantities is essential. Once this has been formulated, the tendering process can start, costs can be determined and a decision made about which project/s to start with, taking budgetary constraints and members' needs into consideration.

CHOOSE A REPUTABLE CONTRACTOR

A golf club should meet with each potential contractor to explain the scope of work. It is important that contractors get to grips with site conditions at the site meeting. These could include the availability of water and electricity, when they won't be allowed to work and access to the site. Responsibilities, payment terms, guarantees, signing-off procedures and project handover details are some of the other matters that should be discussed. The club will also need a projected cash flow from the contractor to assist it in planning.

When it comes to choosing a contractor, cost shouldn't be the only consideration. The chosen contractor should have a solid work CV, credit worthiness and a proven track-record as confirmed through reference checks on completed projects.

THINK AHEAD

Golf clubs should consider the potential inconvenience to members and loss of rounds. A club may have to be innovative, making concessions to incentivise members during the upgrade process. They need to be ready to manage cash flows carefully during this time.

KEEP MEMBERS IN THE LOOP

The importance of good communication with members before and after the upgrade process, in order to secure their buy-in is critical. Through special meetings, regular newsletters and notice boards, members can be kept 'in the know' about upgrade projects and their benefits. Open, honest communication may also allay pressure from members to open facilities before they're entirely ready. Opening upgraded facilities too soon can result in damage and may have cost implications.

STAY INVOLVED

A representative from the club and the golf course architect should be involved in the actual implementation process to ensure that the contractor maintains standards and remains within budget. ■



If the right steps are taken, upgrading a golf course need not be a painful experience for members or the club.

E-Z-GO'S RXV GOLF CART How good is it?

E-Z-GO, part of Textron Inc, an $11-billion multi-industry company (owning Bell Helicopter and Cessna Aircraft among a host of other powerful brands), reckons that its RXV is as good as it gets. *GCM* visited the company's South Agents in Centurion and spoke to Simon Woodman.

E-Z-GO's set-up in South Africa is impressive – gleaming examples of the company's carts are parked in its reception area, and literally hundreds of carts, new and refurbished, are parked in its cavernous warehouse.

Since golf carts made their appearance in the South African market almost 30 years ago, E-Z-GO has captured the lion's share of the market. Initially aimed only at golf course use, golf carts have become the preferred mode of transport in many factories, hospitals, airports and other places where small, economical and effective transport is needed.

When E-Z-GO unveiled the RXV series two years ago, the company suggested that this cart was the proverbial 'bee's knees'. The electric-powered version, certainly the most popular, claimed that the AC drive motor was way superior to anything else on the market – better than the traditional power plants driven by direct current. It is claimed that the RXV's AC motor generates more power, has a longer operating time between charges (about 30 percent more efficient that conventional electric carts) and it is more reliable.

"Other features of this cart include a unique braking system, which means no brake cables, drums or pads, and with its sealed bearings, no lubrication is required," says Simon Woodman. Included in the long of attractions of this cart is its safety features (energy transfer bumpers) and its new-look styling.

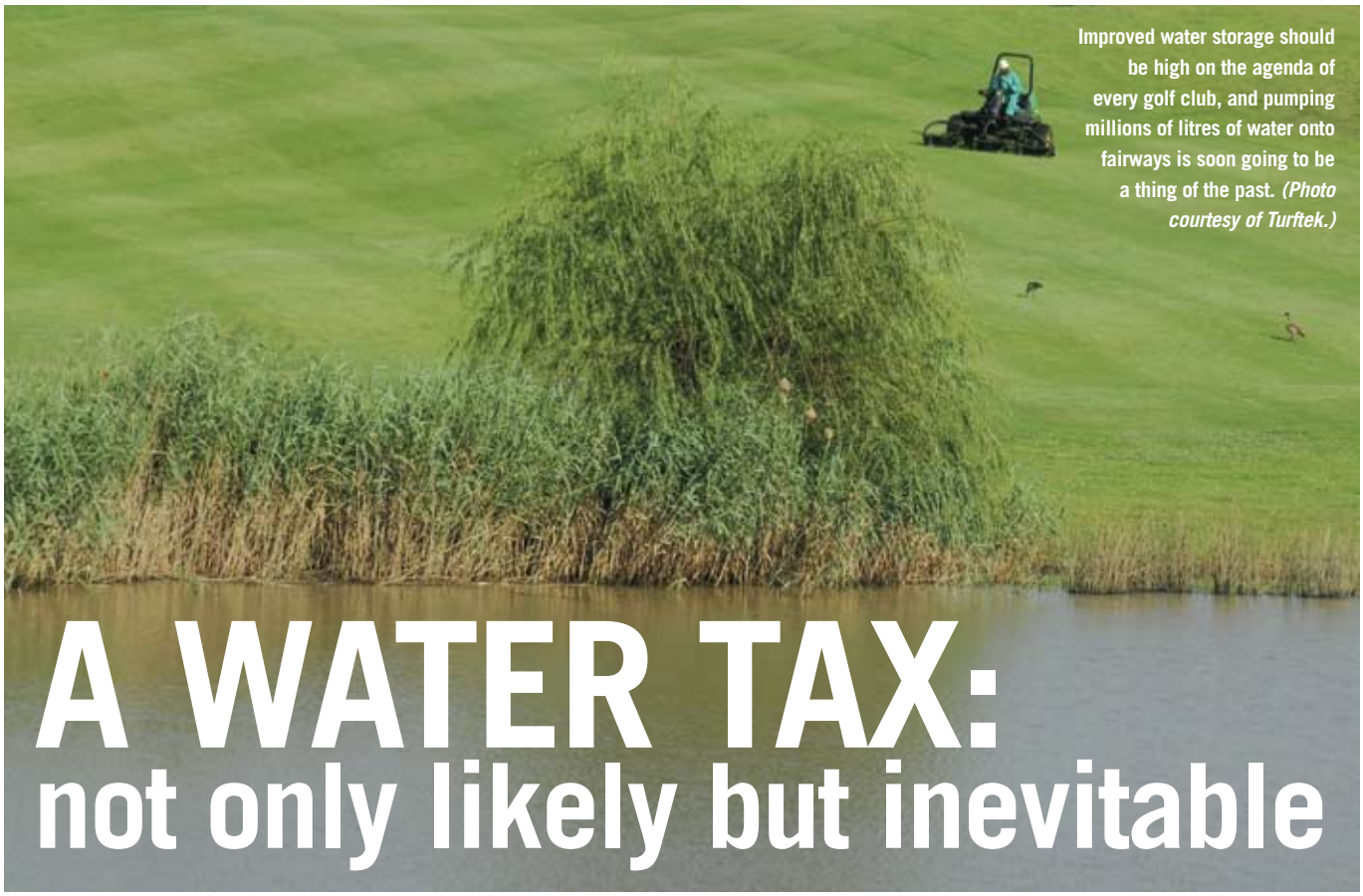
Like all modern, premium-brand carts, the on-board computer stores data such as the number of rounds the cart has completed, and estimates remaining battery warranty. Via a hand-held module which plugs into the dashboard, no less that 17 diagnostic functions can be performed. Another interesting feature is the Swedish-made controller, a device that reads battery capacity, and should this drop to 25 percent, the cart slows down to 9.7kph, alerting the driver to return the car. Should the battery capacity drop to 20 percent, the cart will be stopped and put into 'lock' mode – both these functions aimed at preserving battery life.

E-Z-GO is happy to have the RXV compared with any other cart on the market, and *GCM* will be setting up another comparative test involving the other major brands. The results of this test will be published in our January issue. ■



E-Z-GO's Simon Woodman is confident that his product is superior to any other on the market.





Improved water storage should be high on the agenda of every golf club, and pumping millions of litres of water onto fairways is soon going to be a thing of the past. *(Photo courtesy of Turftek.)*

A WATER TAX: not only likely but inevitable

At the risk of stating the obvious, *GCM* has pointed out in past issues that South Africa is fast running out of clean water. The easiest way of reducing consumption is to make this precious resource more expensive – so where does this leave thirsty golf courses?

It is now official – within the next decade demand for water in South Africa will far exceed supply, which will simply mean that we are going to pay a lot more for it. It is also clear that water will become the biggest limiting factor to economic development. If the golf industry believes that it can simply shrug off the looming water crisis, it had better think again, and quickly.

Professor James Blignaut of Pretoria University was recently quoted as saying that if the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (Asgisa) continues with some its proposed programmes, water rationing is simply going to be enforced sooner than we think. (To achieve its target of an annual growth rate of at least six percent of the GDP between 2001 and 2014, these programmes include a large biofuel project, a large cassava and sugarcane project in KZN and a large water reticulation for the Mokopane-Vaalwater-Marken area in Limpopo.) But even without these plans (which have been described as showing an "ill-founded complacency that is preventing macro-strategists from recognising natural resource constraints in their planning"), at the rate we are going we are still heading for major water shortages.

Long-term solutions include major desalination plants, the use of aquifers, improved waste water re-use, the additional importation of water from Lesotho and the possibility of tapping into the Congo River. All of these options are extremely expensive, which adds up to the inevitable – we are going to have to get used to paying a high price for water.

The time for golf courses to start planning for ways of storing more rain water is now. It would also be wise for clubs to begin eliminating thirsty, alien species of trees and shrubs from their courses without delay, but of course this is an old story that clubs have heard before and continue to do nothing about. So that old, reliable bore-hole continues to deliver sufficient water for your needs? Forget about it, the day is fast approaching when the Department of Water Affairs is simply going to prohibit you from using ground water. And that sweet deal that allows for unlimited use of 'grey' water supplied by your the local purification plant? That is going to come to an end far quicker than you think.

Our government has shown itself to be rather slack when it comes to enforcing environmental laws, and at times various departments have been guilty of simply ignoring scandalous practices by agriculture and mining that have effectively poisoned our rivers. When we suddenly run out of drinking water, we can expect action and, as with the Eskom debacle, we are going to end up footing the bill.

We are fast approaching a time when acres of verdant fairway will simply not be able to irrigated, and greens and tees (if we're lucky), will be sparingly watered by hand. Of course some might say that golf was never meant to played on a soggy, green sponge anyway, and they would have a point. ■

A NEW CHAIRMAN and committee for the GCMGA

The GCMGA has elected a new chairman, Royal Johannesburg and Kensington's **Malcolm Bromley.** Here he explains the purpose and structure of the association.

MISSION

The GCMGA is dedicated to serving its members, advancing their profession and enhancing the game of golf.

GOALS

It is our goal for employers to view greenkeepers as a key asset to the golf facility, and for golfers to view them as being critical to their enjoyment of the game.

WHAT IS THE GCMGA?

The Golf Course Managers and Greenkeepers Association (GCMGA) came into being because greenkeepers saw a need to network and share their experiences on the maintenance and upkeep of golf courses. GCMGA is a Gauteng-based association with course managers and representatives of the turf industry from the Johannesburg and Pretoria areas mostly contributing to its membership.

The association provides information to its members, represents their interests and facilitates training. Perhaps most importantly, the GCMGA provides a forum for discussion and networking among greenkeepers.

The GCMGA and its members would like to be recognised by the golf industry as one of the key contributors in elevating greenkeepers as professionals and raising the standards on South African courses.

Greenkeeping has become a multi-skilled position. Depending on the demands of the club, a greenkeeper may be part scientist, environmentalist, horticulturist, personnel manager, instructor, meteorologist and accountant, to list but a few of the skills required. This is the reason we are motivating for a change in title from 'greenkeeper' to 'course manager'. Greenkeepers are no longer merely 'keepers of greens' but are managers of all open spaces and control budgets running into millions of rands.

The GCMGA currently has 85 greenkeeper members and 43 trade members. The committee comprises five greenkeepers and two trade members. The office bearers are now Malcolm Bromley (chairman), Marinus van Luytgaarden (vice-chairman and treasurer), Bruce Chambers, Rory Anderson, Matthew Johnstone, Sean Byrne and Bryan Bloy.

All planning and scheduling of meetings and events is done by the committee at the beginning of the year in order to have well-organised and interesting meetings.

The association is funded primarily through donations, advertising and member dues.

The association would like to appeal to all



The GCMGA's new chairman Malcolm Bromley.

NATIONAL BODY: SOUTH AFRICAN GOLF GREENKEEPERS ASSOCIATION (SAGGA)

SAGGA is an association consisting of the different regions of greenkeeper associations throughout South Africa. It has as its main objectives:

- To enhance the professional development of golf course greenkeepers by creating a formal education programme for greenkeepers
- To safeguard and promote the interests and well-being of its members
- To lobby government issues on behalf of its members
- To establish and maintain a headquarters facility
- To encourage good business practice and ethics

Mission: Turfgrass excellence through education

club managers to support their greenkeepers in joining the GCMGA or their local greenkeepers association because without your support greenkeepers don't always join. To join the GCMA it will cost the club/greenkeeper R1 500 as a first-time member. Benefits of membership include invitations to attend all monthly meeting, invitations to attend all educational seminars and the receipt of industry-driven magazines. Our meetings are always well organised and are guaranteed to be interesting.

INITIATIVES

- Help members achieve career success
- Research
- GCMGA has spearheaded the formation of a National Greenkeepers Association which will have regional membership. This initiative has been driven by the need to have one voice that addresses the issues that face the industry, namely education standards, government lobbying and best practice. The national body is in the process of finalising the legalities required for its formation and has already been accepted as an associate member of FEGA (Federation of European Greenkeepers Association). This move initiated through the GCMGA sees South Africa take its place in the international arena, which can only benefit the profession and the facilities in South Africa. ■

- **For more information on the GCMGA please contact: 011 482 7542 or GCMGA chairman, Malcolm Bromley 082 260 5833.**

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UNDERSTANDING
the irrigation renovation process

A golf course renovation does not have to be a complicated and confusing process. It is possible to successfully navigate a renovation project by assembling the right team, writes **Donald Matthews,** Rain Bird Golf's area manager for Southern Africa and Indian Ocean islands.

A golf club can do a full course renovation which requires a total redesign of the layout and irrigation or it can chose to do one aspect of the course such as bunkers, greens or tees.

The first step in the renovation process is to outline the expectations for the project. This is so the committee can make an educated decision on how it wants the project to proceed. For example, the committee must decide how much the renovation will impact play. If it is important to keep the course open during the renovation, it may choose to do the project a section at a time. This will obviously have an impact on the duration of the project.

If the goal is to have it done as quickly as possible, it may be necessary to close the course completely for the duration of the project.

It is critical to talk to suppliers that have experience with renovations. Distributors and irrigation equipment manufacturers undertake renovations on a daily basis so they are a valuable source of information on expected costs, time frames, potential roadblocks, distributor service and support levels as well as product capabilities. The course superintendent is also a key resource in a renovation project.

Once the objectives are clear, it is important to communicate with the membership. Effective communication will help manage the membership's perception of the project.

The next step is to assemble a team consisting of an irrigation equipment manufacturer, local distributor, irrigation designer and contractor. Depending on the extent of the renovation, a golf course architect may already be involved. There are many things that are essential considerations when assembling your irrigation renovation team, including: history of local projects, list of references, experience, costs and knowledge of local market conditions, regulations and practices.

Selecting an irrigation equipment manufacturer and local distributor is a crucial initial step. This is because the distributor and manufacturer will provide the products and services vital to the success of the project. You will want to select an irrigation equipment manufacturer based on the company's reputation and experience delivering quality golf irrigation products. The local distributor will be your key resource, providing service and information long after the construction is complete. The club should be comfortable with these long-term relationships because it



will rely on the distributor and manufacturer for the life of the system.

An irrigation design is a central building-block of the renovation process, will determine the scope of the project in terms of time and cost and will also allow the club to determine if the design will meet expectations.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION TO YOUR IRRIGATION DESIGNER:

- Scale drawings of the site showing areas to be irrigated, contours and also a vegetation schedule
- Information on the water source, borehole, river, treated water and the size of the storage capacity
- Information on allowable irrigation time
- Information on the system budget

A FEW POINTS TO LOOK FOR IN AN IRRIGATION DESIGNER:

- Obtain a list of references and talk to former clients to determine their satisfaction with the designer. Were they taken care of, was the designer responsive and was the timetable met?
- Does the irrigation designer embrace the latest technology on design and water-management tools?
- Is the irrigation designer going to provide you with the time you need and, more importantly, will he embrace your needs and provide a solution?

CHOOSE AN IRRIGATION CONTRACTOR:

It is important to have a qualified irrigation contractor. This will ensure the project is completed on time and on budget. It is vital that the club obtain a detailed history and list of references for the installer. This will increase the installer's comfort level and provide peace of mind that the project is completed to the satisfaction of the membership.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS TO LOOK OUT FOR:

- Wind conditions – High precipitation rate, medium-pressure and medium-radius sprinklers should be specified for continuously windy sites. Special wind-tolerant sprinklers should also be considered. Low precipitation rate turf-grade sprinklers are simply blown away, resulting in poor distribution uniformity coefficients and water loss.
- Slopes – If a site has considerable slope block-type stations may cause puddling around sprinklers and will result in wet, unplayable areas. Valve-in-head sprinklers should be used on contoured sites, budget allowing.
- Hydraulic network – A good irrigation designer will make use of pipe-network-simulation software to design complex pipe networks. This is the heart of the system and needs to be sized to the specific needs. Pipes may be too small resulting in high system wear and premature failure of irrigation components. Pipes may also have an incorrect pressure rating, leading to pipe bursts, causing substantial water loss and damage to the course. Pump stations and pipe networks, when undersized, could lead to an unacceptably large watering window, interfering with play during day time.

A well-designed irrigation system should apply the correct amount of water when needed at the correct precipitation rate. It should have a high efficiency rate to save on energy and water costs.

When it comes to irrigation it is essential to educate and continually update the membership on the status of the project. Make sure you communicate to the membership why the new irrigation system is needed and how it will impact them both negatively in the short term and positively in the long run.

Setting realistic expectations, choosing the right team and communicating effectively throughout the process are the keys to a successful renovation. ■

CONTRIBUTORS: Donald Matthews (Area Manager Rain Bird Golf, Southern Africa and Indian Ocean Islands), Lloyd von Scheliha (Product Manager, Rain Bird Golf Division)

- **Contact Rain Bird:**
  Tel: 021 979 3157, Fax: 086 6898 338
  E-mail: dmat@mweb.co.za





Five-star drive

When it came time for Pecanwood's general manager Ken Payet to hand back the Cadillac CTS, he was rather reluctant to say goodbye to the car, and he now sees the iconic American brand in a totally different light.

"I must say that I have never been a great fan of American cars, but the Cadillac CTS has definitely changed my view," says Ken Payet. As the manager one of *Compleat Golfer's* 5-Star Golf Experience clubs, he was given the Cadillac for a week and was asked to give his opinion of the car that claims to be every bit a five-star driving experience. "I found it rather difficult to take the CTS out for a leisurely Sunday afternoon drive – the 229Kw of power via the 3.6-litre, direct-injection motor springs to life and delivers a big helping of smooth power. It is easy to put a little too much pressure on the accelerator because this engine is so quiet," he says. "I must admit that I did sneak over the speed limit – I won't say by how much, but I didn't notice any flashes so I hopefully will not receive any surprises in the post. The interior of this car is pure indulgence – in fact, it feels like being in the cockpit of a fighter jet, but the difference here is that you are in the lap of luxury. The beautiful leather and attractive genuine wood trim is impressive, and I particularly liked the remote starting feature which allows the driver to start the engine from 60 metres away, and by the time you get into the car all the climate-control settings have taken effect. When it comes to top-end vehicles this compares with the best, and when I am looking for a new car I will be giving serious consideration to the CTS. What a privilege it was to enjoy this car for the week, and I have to admit that it was quite an experience to see other drivers and pedestrians looking at me with envy – this is a real head-turner, and at the price nothing else comes close."

Pecanwood made it onto *Compleat Golfer's* first list as one of the 5-Star Golf Experiences in the country, and has remained on this list ever since. ■

Cadillac

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In order to qualify for the *GCM* Preferred Supplier list, a supplier must obtain a minimum of three different golf club referrals or recommendations. Once GCM/PS approved, the supplier will receive a Preferred Supplier certificate endorsed by *GCM* and will be featured in a listing published on a monthly basis in *GCM* and on www.compleatgolfer.co.za/gcm.

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PGA OF SA

The Professional Golfers Association's education and training manager **Andrew Gunn** spoke to Caryn Louw, one of South Africa's most successful woman golfers, who is currently doing her second year of the PGA apprentice programme.

AG: Tell us a bit about your background – how did you get into golf?

CL: I had always been good at sport – I played junior Springbok softball, Southern Transvaal netball, hockey, swimming and tennis. I got given a set of golf clubs for my 16th birthday and improved from a 36 to a three handicap in 11 months. I was a Springbok golfer for about a year and then took up a golf scholarship in the USA. In 1991 I turned pro and played on the European Tour. It was a difficult time because there was a hiatus of about three years in which they really struggled for sponsors. In 1995 I got my full-time card and in '96 won the Spanish Open and gained a three-year exemption.

In 1999 I got onto the LPGA Tour. It was amazing to see the difference between how the pros were treated on the two tours. In Europe you were just another pro trying to make it, whereas in America you were treated like a celebrity and everything was laid on.

Winning the South African RE/MAX Long Drive Championships in 2004 and 2007 and finishing in 11th place in the World Championships in Mesquite, Nevada, was an experience that I will never forget.

AG: How are you finding doing your apprenticeship?

CL: It is really difficult to come back to studying after not doing it for 20 years. The academic part of the programme is quite hectic. We do a distance-learning course made up of subjects such as sports science (sports psychology, biomechanics, diet and nutrition, prevention of injuries, anatomy and physiology), golf coaching and swing theory, business finance and golf retailing, business law, rules of golf and equipment technology.

I think it is easier for the school-leavers because they are in the studying groove. For us older guys it is harder. However you have to look at the end result: your PGA qualification is recognised throughout Europe and you would be accepted if you go overseas. Also it opens doors in a lot of different fields. Studying all the different subjects gives you an understanding of being involved in different aspects of the golf industry.

AG: What do you particularly enjoy about your studies?

CL: I am fascinated by the sports science aspects. I believe that by using the theory I am learning I can help my pupils a lot more. For example, physiology teaches that if your body has physical limitations that don't allow you to maintain your address position, spine angle and proper swing mechanics, you'll have minimal chance making a mechanically sound golf swing. For me, the most exciting developments in golf coaching are coming from the fitness aspects of the golf game.

I recently attended a PGA seminar by Doug Heel and I am a convert of the muscle activation he teaches. Very briefly, the muscles are activated by using various acupressure points in the body. Besides relieving pain, acupressure can help rebalance the body by dissolving tension and stresses that keep it from functioning smoothly. It helps the muscles work in the correct sequence and puts strength back into the body.



Caryn together with the PGA's Craig Ross.

AG: Do you use activation in your coaching?

CL: Definitely.

AG: Obviously you find it works then?

CL: Yes it does – you notice an immediate amazing improvement, but people don't improve as much as they should in the long term because they don't go away and practise and they lose the good feeling. Also activation doesn't work forever. People have to keep themselves activate in between sessions and also practise and train to harness their new-found strength.

AG: I have been activated and have experienced both the benefits and the pain. It occurred to me that people might be put off by the painful side.

CL: Yes, I feel a lot of people may be put off because it can be pretty painful. The results, however, speak for themselves and I think very soon people realise that in the end what they gain is worth that little bit of pain.

AG: How do you feel about inflicting pain?

CL: With some of my clients we have a good laugh and others try to be brave.

AG: Caryn, where do you see yourself when you have qualified?

CL: I have not really thought that far ahead, at the moment I am just trying to get through the assignments and studying. ■

■ **Caryn is teaches at a variety of venues and can be contacted on 072 198 0844. Anyone wishing to learn more about the PGA programme can log on to www.pgasa.com or contact Andrew Gunn on 011 485 1370.**

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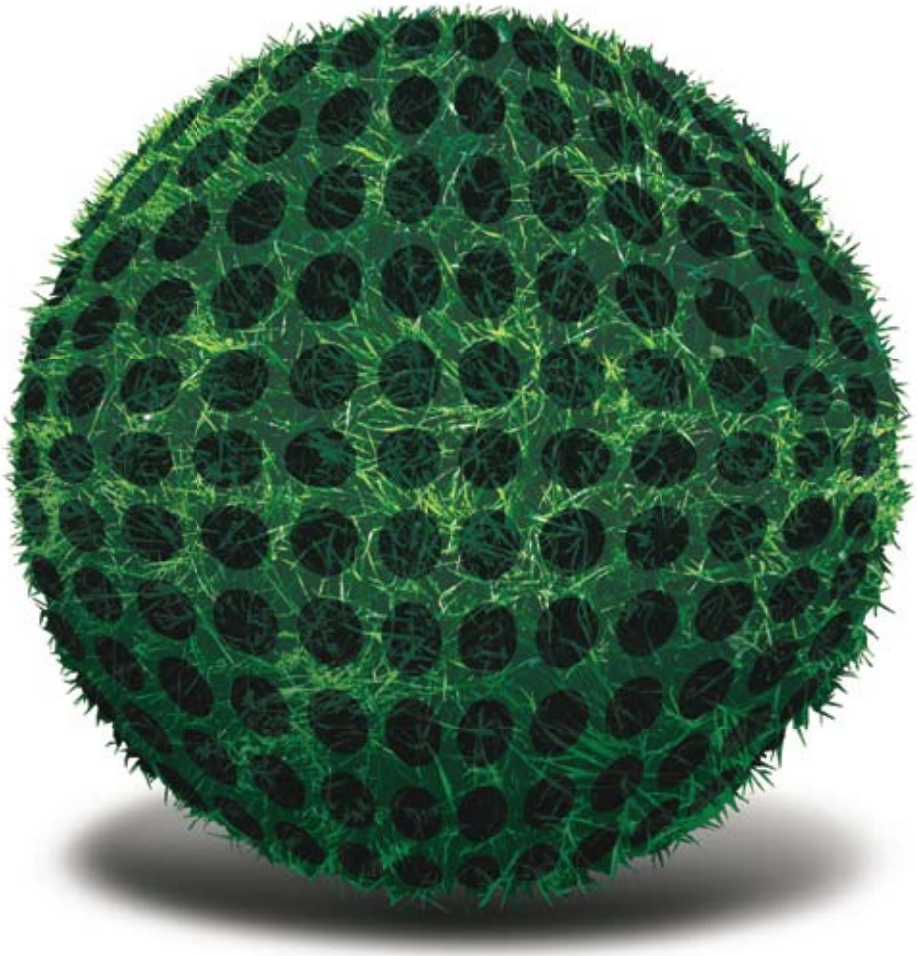
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