



<b>LEAD STORY</b> • Relationship between club and pro – part 2	<b>1</b>
<b>SPECIAL FEATURE</b> • Golf Wise Programme	<b>5</b>
<b>FROM THE CMASA</b> • Revenue Laws Amendment Bill	<b>6</b>
• Message from the Chairman	<b>7</b>
<b>SPECIAL FEATURE</b> • Golf estates assessment study	<b>8</b>
<b>TURFTEK</b> • Fertilise your greens effectively	<b>9</b>
<b>HR: DEVELOPMENT</b> • New beginnings in 2007	<b>10</b>
<b>HR: LEGAL</b> • Searching your staff	<b>12</b>
<b>COURSE MANAGEMENT</b> • Summer stress management	<b>14</b>

A monthly newsletter brought to you by *Compleat Golfer* magazine.

Volume 3 Issue 1

# Relationship between club and pro

*In part two of the series, Andrew Wilson explains what a positive impact an efficient golf pro can make on a golf club.*

**IN LAST MONTH'S ARTICLE** we examined *what* we should be trying to achieve in the relationship between club committees and pros. We have singled out the golf pro because he or she is 'the face' of the club. If the pro is firing on all cylinders, the club will be successful. This month we concentrate on the *how* and suggest ways to implement a win/win/win situation; a win for the club, a win for the pro and, most importantly, a win for the members and visitors.

Firstly, let's look at a principle. In the previous article we discussed the club owning the brand. The game of golf is bigger than any club, just as any club is bigger than any person in the club, be it the captain, a member, the manager or the pro. For this reason the club must own the brand and any royalties that stem from it. The prime responsibility of any person working for a golf club, and especially the pro, must be to protect and enhance the brand. Now let's look at how clubs can put together structures, staffing and contracts to ensure that the pro is empowered to perform and deliver outstanding results.

## Involvement in long-term planning

Golf clubs need to think at least five to eight years ahead if they are going to progressively protect and enhance their brand. To quote Steven Covey from his book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, analysing spreadsheets is all well and good for dealing with the things that are important



### Golf and the environment

The Western Cape Department of Environmental Planning and Economic Development released the findings of an impact assessment study into the effects of golf courses on the environment and the socio-economy. See *GCM's* review of the report on page 8.

and urgent, but what about the things that are important and not urgent?

How much time do committees spend on developing long-term objectives, and then analysing to what extent the structure within the club, and staffing capabilities, will enable them to achieve those objectives? It is great to have wonderful ideas and plans for the future, but unless your club is properly structured and staffed, you will suffer the fate of many South African companies that have exciting strategic planning sessions out in the bush and then wonder why nothing happens.

If you start out properly the journey will be much easier. Start by involving your club manager and pro in the development or review of your club's vision and mission statements. Involvement breeds commitment.

Commit to paper your vision of what the club will be like in five, 10, 15 years' time. Then move on to identifying the specifics that will need to change and occur in order for you to achieve the vision. If your pro is central to the review or development of your vision and mission, he or she will be committed to ensuring implementation; if not included, the chances of success are severely reduced.

Set down certain long-term objectives and allocate responsibility to individuals (not sub-committees) for implementation. People make things happen, not committees. To help ensure that progress towards your objectives is maintained, diarise quarterly reviews, where individuals who are responsible for achieving results are also held accountable.

*Continued on page 2*

# SPECIAL FEATURE: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CLUB AND PRO

*Continued from page 1*

## Long term planning

The types of issues that should be part of your long-term planning could include:

- increasing the future value of membership to the club
- course design to suit member needs
- the development of new or upgraded facilities
- future funding for capital requirements
- reward systems to attract and retain high-calibre staff
- reduction of operating costs and improvement of services through development of technology

The short-term needs of the club such as planned rounds and income, reduced cost of operation and current complaints and crises will always be there, but if you don't have a focus on the future you will be left behind.

## Establishing appropriate structures

The days of all-powerful club committees dictating to the club manager, pro and members what is going to happen, and when, are over.

The golf club is like any other business trying to survive in a highly competitive environment. For this to happen you need the club to be run by dedicated people who have the tenure, expertise and authority to ensure results.

Last month we touched on the temporary nature of committees, and the problems this creates. Captains, in office for a year, may well initiate some long-term thinking and planning, but by the time serious implementation is required, a new captain is in the chair.

There is an international and local trend to do away with decision-making committees made up of members only and to replace them with an executive committee structured roughly as follows:

**Chairperson:** A member of the club who is voted in approximately every three years by the members.

**Golfing experience:** A member of the club who is voted in approximately every three years by the members and is responsible for all matters relating to the golfing experience.

**Operational:** A member of the club who is voted in every approximately every three

years by the members and is responsible for all matters relating to the financial, administrative and operational side of the club.

**The club manager:** A paid professional who is responsible for all non-golf-related activities in the club.

**The director of golf:** A paid professional who is responsible for all golf-related activities in the club.

In some cases it would be appropriate for the club manager to be in charge of the running of the club with the pro reporting to him or her. In other cases the club manager



**A good golf pro, who is involved in activities such as giving lessons, can be invaluable to a club.**

and the pro could be of equal status, both reporting to the chairperson. This will depend upon the calibre of people employed and where you want the emphasis to be.

There is still a need for a non-executive committee whose primary responsibilities are the long-term financial survival of the club, its fiduciary responsibilities, and the development and protection of the club brand. The chairman of the executive committee, must clearly sit on the non-executive committee but the running of the club must be left up to the executive committee.

Focusing on the director of golf, this position would only be suitable in the larger clubs, but the principles can equally apply to smaller clubs. His or her responsibilities would include course development and maintenance as well as the running of the pro shop, although they would have experts in their fields reporting to them. In smaller clubs the greens expert may well sit on the executive committee and report directly to the executive chairperson.

Remember that the design, development and maintenance of the course is critical to the long-term success of any club. Whether you have a greens expert on your staff or outsource the function of course maintenance and repair, the responsibility must remain with the club. There are extremely competent people out there to be hired either as members of your team or as consultants. Whichever route you take, make sure you are contracting the best you can afford.

## Staffing

Staffing is probably the most critical aspect to ensure success. Things happen through the energy and actions of people. If you employ and appropriately reward high-calibre people, and give them the power to perform, you will succeed.

If you employ low-calibre people, however good your structures and intentions may be, you will fail.

This is why I have queried whether we were setting the bar high enough for people to be able to perform effectively as directors of golf. It's fine to play around with titles but there is a huge difference between being a director of golf on the one hand, and a golf pro on the other.

A good few years of gaining experience across the full spectrum of golf and club life will be the training ground for successful future directors of golf. However good the club and course facilities may be, it is the people who will ultimately make the difference. The golf professional is the golf expert and therefore the public face of your club. For the remainder of this article we will use the title of director of golf.

Providing you have recruited the right person, empower them to perform. As we discussed in last month's article, there are four components that need to be in place to enable any of your team members, but particularly your director of golf, to perform up to expectation:

**Knowledge:** To be a part of the inner circle of running the club. To be kept informed of all that is going on in the club, both positive and negative, so that he or she can lead the golfing experience from the front.

**Skills:** To be allowed the budget and time to keep learning, whether it be the game of golf, teaching techniques, rule changes,

*Continued on page 4*



## SPECIAL FEATURE: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CLUB AND PRO

*Continued from page 2*

merchandising and display methods or interpersonal skills.

**Status:** To be included in all meetings to do with the golfing experience so that he or she can influence the decisions that are made.

**Rewards:** To have a contract that rewards results. The role of the director of golf is not a 40-hour-a-week job, and therefore to attract and retain the right calibre of person, clubs need to develop contracts that are competitive with the commercial marketplace.

### Contracts

This is probably the most contentious area and it is impossible to deal with it fully in one article. Going back to the principle we raised at the beginning of the article, the club owns the brand. For this reason I believe that the club also owns any royalties or benefits that stem from owning the brand.

This doesn't mean the director of golf should miss out. He should be employed by the club as a senior executive and rewarded appropriately.

On the one hand, the golf pro is similar to the professional footballer. There are a few at the top who earn megabucks through playing the game, then there is the main body of professionals who can earn a good living through plying their trade. On the other hand, however, the director of golf has many responsibilities beyond playing golf. He or she has to be skilled in areas such as teaching, retailing, event organisation and inter-personal relations.

Unless a pro starts his or her own business, or buys into the ownership of a club and invests accordingly, they should be contracted and rewarded as an executive-level employee. The package must include a market-related guaranteed income coupled with exciting incentive bonuses.

There is debate as to whether the club or the director of golf should own the shop. In an ideal world the club should own the shop and the director of golf should be tasked with running it successfully.

The reality, however, is that most clubs don't want to be bothered with the running of their pro shop and therefore hand it over to their pro. There are many examples, especially in Gauteng, of where the pro owns the shop and runs a highly successful operation for their own benefit and the ben-



**Be specific with your director of golf about issues such as pro-am participation and who to invite.**

efit of the club. They deserve everything they earn, considering the fact that they will have invested upwards of R1.5 million in stock, not counting the capital investment in fixtures, fitting and technology, as well as working in the region of a 60-hour week.

It is essential that the club retains control of the critical success factors relating to the shop – range of merchandise, standards of staff, appearance and cleanliness, etc. The pro shop is part of the image that a club projects and is therefore part of the formula for protecting and enhancing the brand.

Some clubs are now offering their directors of golf three- to five-year contracts in an effort to create stability. I believe the contract should be drawn up so that the better the club does, the more the director of golf earns. Give incentives for things like new members joining, visitor rounds up to a certain cut-off figure and shop profitability. Allow the director of golf to benefit from handling greenfees and cart management.

These are aspects of revenue that the director of golf can influence. Stability does not come through how many years there are to run on a contract; stability comes through all parties being happy with the relationship.

The aim of a good contract and the job description linked to the contract is to specify the results and standards required rather than the activities. If you have certain requirements in terms of what you want your director of golf to do, then be specific, but more impor-

tantly, make sure you have identified and agreed with him or her exactly what standards are required and what results are expected.

If you want to be specific in the contract regarding what you want the director of golf to do in order to enable him or her to achieve the agreed long-term goals and standards, then identify matters such as:

- how much teaching can or should be done
- pro-am participation and who to invite
- types of competitions and frequency
- member contact and frequency of games
- marketing strategies and expectations
- development programmes

It is impossible to develop a blueprint that will suit all clubs and golf professionals. But if clubs want to be seen as market leaders they will have to harness the expertise of the more experienced professionals in the industry and empower them to lead the golfing 'theatre' at club level.

In the longer term, this means that the PGA, in conjunction with the industry, will have to ensure that they equip their students with the necessary skills and abilities to interact at the highest level across all facets of the golfing experience.

The route to becoming a successful director of golf will be through completing a high-level academic qualification backed up by broad and hands-on experience. It's all about adding value for members and visitors in the future, and not just about analysing spreadsheet data from the past.

## SPECIAL FEATURE

### Life lessons from golf

*A new programme aims to give training and employment opportunities in the golf industry to prison inmates.*

IN HIS JANUARY 2006 column in *Complete Golfer*, Dale Hayes wrote about Eunice Sibiyá's Operation Exodus initiative currently underway at Leeukop Prison – a 14-week spiritual life-skills programme which is loosely based on the life lessons learnt through golf. Dale gave some thoughts on how the golf industry could become involved in the programme, and was approached by Glencoe Correctional Centre in KwaZulu-Natal, who expressed an interest in getting something going at their facility. After much planning and preparation, the programme at Glencoe officially gets underway from January 2007.



**The inmates at Glencoe Correctional Centre selected for the 2007 Golf Wise programme.**

Glencoe selected eight prisoners who are within a year or so of being released to start Eunice's Operation Exodus course early in the new year. Once they have completed her course, they will begin their 'Golf Wise' training with Dale's Golf Inner Circle. At the same time, they will be working on their existing nine-hole course, which will give them fantastic and much-needed practical experience of working on a golf course.

The PGA of SA and the Greenkeepers Association are committed to the programme and will be sending a professional and a greenkeeper out to Glencoe for four hours each, every month, to teach and train these inmates, while Peter Matkovich will do a basic redesign of the Glencoe golf course early in the new year.

The aim of the programme is not to teach these inmates to play golf – it is rather intended to give them the skills and experience of working on a golf course, while giving them a greater understanding and hopefully passion for the game. They will become 'Golf Wise' by being taught the basics of golf, and the basics of greenkeeping, course construction and maintenance.

At the end of the year of training they will be given a certificate of achievement and the CMASA has expressed its commitment to assist in placing them in jobs at golf clubs.

*For more information, contact Alison Hayes on 082 990 7528.*

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## Golf clubs and income tax

*Implications for recreation clubs in terms of the Revenue Laws Amendment Bill, by Beryl Acres, General Manager of the Club Management Association of Southern Africa.*

**DURING EARLY OCTOBER 2006**, the National Treasury published the Draft Revenue Laws Amendment Bill for public comment. The Draft Bill was debated at public hearings before the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Finance (PCoF). Subsequent to these public hearings, SARS and the National Treasury revised their initial proposals.

The Club Management Association of Southern Africa (CMASA), an association not-for-gain, representing the recreational club sector in South Africa, in association with Jackie Arendse, tax partner at Howard Arendse & Associates and Colin Wolfsohn of Wolfsohn & Associates, made a submission to the PcoF on behalf of their member clubs and the sector in general opposing the proposed amendments and highlighting the problems related thereto.

### Original proposal

Many clubs were not aware of the implications of the proposed amendments, which included taxing all non-member business (sport fees, beverage and food sales, venue hire, investment income) at 34 percent. Besides the financial tax burden, sophisticated accounting and POS systems would have been required by most clubs to separate this income. I suspect audit fees would have increased to account for what could have become an extremely difficult audit.

One example and how it could have affected your club is:

'Up the Creek Golf Club', with a membership of 250, play their golf out of a facility on leased land from the local town council. The facility has a small clubhouse, with a bar and halfway house. The golf club is situated in a small coastal town and relies on affiliated member rounds to meet their ever-increasing costs of maintaining the facilities. Up the Creek Golf Club has three administration staff members and a volunteer committee of eight, who are all involved in the running of the club. In terms of the proposed legislation, Up the Creek

Golf Club would have had to purchase an up-to-date accounting system to be able to allocate member vs non-member business – besides golf playing fees, this would have included any bar or halfway-house revenue. The proposed amendments kindly allowed Up the Creek Golf Club to receive R20 000 from their non-member business (after expenses) before they would have a tax liability at a rate of 34 percent. This R20 000 *de minimus* also included any interest on monies invested and any other business related revenue – ie rental, etc.

### Amended proposal

Recreational clubs **will be partially taxable** in a less onerous manner than was originally proposed.

Initial proposals	Amended legislation
Income tax on all non-member business	No distinction between member and non-member business as long as it is related to your core objective ie provision of recreation and sports facilities for members and their guests
Tax rate of 34 percent	Tax rate of 29 percent
No payment to employees of percentage of revenue	No payment to employees of percentage of revenue
<i>De minimus</i> of R20 000 per annum for unrelated business income (including investment income and non-member business)	<i>De minimus</i> of the greater of five percent of member subscriptions and member fees or R50 000 per annum for unrelated business income (including investment income)
Sale of membership rights prohibited	Sale of membership rights prohibited

All business at your club, as long as it is aligned to your core objective (sport and recreational facilities) will be exempt for income-tax purposes. Non-core business eg rental and investment income will be exempt in terms of partial taxation, ie an amount equal to the greater of five percent of all member subscriptions or fees or R50 000 pa (less any deductible expenses) will be subject to 29 percent tax. This is lot less onerous than the original proposal which allowed for an 'all-or-nothing' basis of R20 000.

All clubs will be required to re-apply for exemption based on the new legislation. The 'how and when' is still unclear. Your previous exemption under Section 10(1)(d) will fall away once the Bill is enacted. It is proposed that the new legislation is effective as from 1 April 2007 for recreational clubs whose financial year commences after that date.

In short, the following applies:

'Recreational club' means any company contemplated in Section 21 of the Companies Act, 1973, society or other association of which the sole or principal object is to provide social and recreational amenities or facilities for the members of that company, society or other association.

The constitution should provide for the following:

- Its activities must be carried on in a non-profit manner.
- It is prohibited from directly or indirectly distributing any surplus funds to any person, other than in terms of subparagraph below.
- It is required on dissolution to transfer its assets and funds to any other recreational club which is approved by the commissioner or to a public benefit organisation.
- It may not pay any remuneration to any person which is excessive, having regard to what is generally considered reasonable in the sector and in relation to services rendered, nor may any remuneration be determined as a percentage of any amounts received or accrued to that recreational club.

## Unity is strength

The recent submission on the Proposed Amendments to Revenue Laws made to Parliament on behalf of the club industry by the CMASA is an important indication of what an association like the CMASA can do. As an association, we managed to convince them to reverse their proposals on taxing clubs. Any individual club would have found it extremely difficult to even receive a hearing at Parliament.



Income tax is a small, yet extremely significant example of the challenges that clubs will be facing in the years to come, and we will all need to stand together in order to manage these challenges.

Collectively, we can get the best advice for the industry as a whole. The costs of fighting all these battles individually would scare most clubs. Morally, as custodians of the club industry and leaders in our community, we need to accept certain things that may not be in the best interest of any individual club, but generally is in the best interest of the industry and our country.

Our extremely competent General Manager, Beryl Acres, is perhaps the closest and most learned person to the policy-makers on all matters such as taxation, development, liquor and smoking laws, etc. As much as we as managers want to be entrusted with the success of our clubs, we need to trust in the skills and integrity of our General Manager.

Make your association, the CMASA, stronger by participating whenever possible and together our strength will get the recognition and respect of the necessary people.

*Paul Leishman, Chairman, CMASA*

- All members must be entitled to annual or seasonal membership.
- Members are not allowed to sell their membership rights or any entitlement in terms thereof.
- The club undertakes to submit to the commissioner a copy of any amendment to the constitution.

Failure to comply with the provisions of Section 30A (abbreviated above) or the constitution (club) that relates to these provisions will result in the commissioner notifying the recreational club that he or she intends withdrawing the exemption approval of that recreational club if no corrective steps are taken by that club within a period stated in that notice.

### Author's comment

For the hundreds of amateur sports and recreation clubs in South Africa, many of which have only volunteer leaders and operate without any fixed facilities (clubhouse), even the registration requirements (still to be defined) could be extremely onerous, with particular reference to those situated in

rural areas. A possible threshold entry level requirement for these clubs could have been provided for in the legislation.

This new legislation may be onerous for many clubs, but we believe it is the best solution to a bad proposal. When one considers that charities, churches and the like are treated in a similar manner, is this legislation unexpected? I think not; clubs have always been viewed, incorrectly, as elitist and unfortunately the larger and more prosperous clubs have highlighted 'club life' and the perceived wealth attached thereto. Our negotiations with the National Treasury required us to take the middle road and negotiate in the best interests of all clubs in South Africa. When one considers discussions the CMASA had some four years ago with SARS, it was then the intention to tax all non-member business and all food and beverage business. I believe we have negotiated a deal that is workable and fair.

For any further information on this tax issue, please contact Beryl Acres, General Manager, CMASA, on (011) 482-7542 or gm@clubmanagement.co.za.



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### People on the move

**Richard Lambrick**, who previously worked in the United Kingdom, is now the general manager at Durban Country Club.

**Ray Stopforth**, formerly of San Lameer, is now golf director at Victoria Country Club.

**Derek Lloyd** moves from outside the industry to Randpark Club as golf director.

**Sue Nortje**, who was previously at Erinvale Golf Club, is now the financial manager at Steenberg.

**Ben du Toit** is the new pro at Mossel Bay Golf Club.

**Ron van Niekerk** is the new manager at Royal Port Alfred Golf Club.

# Golf estates in the Western Cape – a government report

*The Western Cape is bursting with golf course developments, a factor which prompted Tasneem Essop, Provincial Minister of Environmental Planning and Economic Development, to launch an impact assessment study into the effects of golf courses on the environment as well on the socio-economy.*

**LAUNCHED IN OCTOBER 2004**, this Rapid Review was an attempt to establish guidelines and a standard of best practice that would help to promote sustainable development of golf courses and to ensure that such developments do not harm the Western Cape floral kingdom with its unique biodiversity and amazing natural resources, as well as understand the effect on local communities.

The findings were wider-reaching than just the golf and polo industries: the review was found to be relevant to developments that included game farms, equestrian and wine estates as well as larger residential developments within nature areas.

The standard sustainable development model that is applied claims that an equal balance between economic, environmental and sociological needs will ensure sustainable development, but the report highlights the changing view of how this model should work (it should effectively be more “overlapping”) and also highlights the fact that some developers have advertised their development before the relevant permissions have been granted – such advertising is illegal and inappropriate.

The report speculates that the average golf estate residential unit “will generate R1.6 million in indirect and induced expenditure during the construction period and R218 000 indirect and induced expenditure per annum during the operational phase”. It calculates that for every R1 million spent roughly, 19 jobs will be created, although it does stress that the majority of these are low-skilled positions. In addition, for every R1 spent an additional 80 cents of income is generated indirectly, 80 percent of which would impact on the local economy and 20 percent on the regional economy.

A major point that the report stresses is that resorts are almost exclusively occupied by the upper end of the market, which in essence means that at such estates “public access is generally highly restricted”.

Golf tourism is not shown to be as dramatic as most people claim, although the report highlights the fact that an event such as The Presidents Cup had an economic impact of R285 million on the Garden Route region, which outstrips massive events such as the Argus Cycle Tour and the Comrades Marathon.

The report refers to a case study for a proposed golf estate with 600 residential units with a projected capital investment of R393 million, with 860 skilled jobs and

*It calculates that  
for every R1 million  
spent, roughly  
19 jobs will  
be created.*

2 175 semi-skilled or unskilled jobs being created, which it speculates creates a living for 12 000 people who in turn spend their income in the local area, which would “create an income for others to the value of R83 million”, with unskilled workers having just 10 percent of spending power compared to skilled workers.

A major area of concern is that the creation of large-scale job opportunities might cause large-scale “migration of job seekers into the area, and once construction is completed, this could further exacerbate unemployment”.

Another major concern is the debate about agricultural land being used and the loss of benefit from that land as well as the impact on water resources, in addition to traffic and transport requirements by the workers and residents. Local vegetation in certain areas is “highly to totally irreplaceable (80-100 percent)” and golf estates can lead to habitat loss for local fauna. Large-scale

developments can also “have a significant impact on some of the ecological processes that sustain the vegetation units, such as fire, pollination and migration of animal species”, and this is a major concern worldwide.

The review has some interesting statistics relating to public utilisation of facilities. Around R275 million is spent on greenfees per annum in the Western Cape, with an additional R225 million per year being spent on caddies, food, beverages and other purchases at the course. It also calculated that around R150 million is spent on membership fees per annum. This totals R650 million calculated as the direct income for the golfing industry per annum in the Western Cape, of which around R250 million goes to salaries. These figures exclude golf developments and golf days.

The report outlines how many trips will be taken by a purchaser from first viewing through to negotiating and then signing the documents as well as overseeing construction, and estimates that the average “total visiting spend” by a stand purchaser will be almost R50 000 up until the time of completion of the build.

“It has become apparent that the location of some public and private investment is not laying the basis for economic, social and environmental sustainability (and the Rapid Review and related reports) represent a sincere and considered effort to present a set of policies and actions to address the above-mentioned challenges and opportunities, to ultimately achieve a best solution and a most effective way to achieve environmental sustainability, economic efficiency and social justice,” says Tasneem Essop.

After all, there are no do-overs when it comes to developing areas of pristine natural beauty.

*\* The full report can be found on the website of the Western Cape Provincial Government, [www.capegateway.gov.za/eadp](http://www.capegateway.gov.za/eadp) (search for ‘Rapid Review’).*

## Are you fertilising your greens to death?

*Danny Maritz on how to fertilise your greens for top results.*

**A COMMON PROBLEM** today's green-keepers face is pressure to produce a course that looks like Augusta in April. For best results, consider the following important points.

### Soil conditions and types

Ideally, have your ground analysed by a reputable laboratory. Soil plays a major role in establishing healthy turf, and is probably the most neglected part of grass maintenance. Its condition is the most likely cause of turf not reacting to fertilising. The soil's chemical composition plays a major role in the ability of nutrients to leach into the turf.

### Relationship between diseases and nutrients

Unfortunately, high levels of macro elements can result in favourable conditions for disease

development. Excessive nitrogen can result in Brown Patch, Gray Leaf Spot, Pythium spp, Yellow Tuft and Take All Patch. Too much potassium may cause Brown Patch.

Equally, poor levels of certain elements can increase the possibility of infestations. Insufficient nitrogen can cause Anthracnose, Dollar Spot, Rusts and Summer Patch, and low phosphorus concentrations may encourage Pythium spp. A shortage of potassium could result in the appearance of Dollar Spot, Spring Dead Spot and Crown and Root Rot.

It is a delicate balancing act to apply the amounts required to achieve the desired effect, without running the risk of encouraging invaders.

### Nutrients and healthy turf

Here are a few practical pointers to improve your turf quality:

- Colour is only a small part of a good surface.
- Too much fertiliser creates thatch and/or matted surfaces. It is preferable to have 'lean' turf than to over-fertilise.
- Ensure that dusting, verti-cutting, hollow-tining, etc are done regularly and thoroughly.
- Follow a good programme from a credible consultant if you require assistance.
- Focus your attention on root growth, and healthy turf will follow.
- Get a good book on soil fertilising and use it.

### Top Tip

Never fertilise because you want to  
– fertilise because you need to!



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### New beginnings for the New Year

*Andrew Wilson discusses how you can make the most of opportunities at your club in the new year.*

**WHETHER WE EMERGE** energised or exhausted from the festive season, we now have an opportunity for a fresh start. It is a good time to put into place plans for the future and make commitments that will hopefully turn into reality.

In the January 2006 edition of *GCM* we wrote about performance analysis and gave readers an agenda for holding a performance review session. In case you have lost the article or didn't get to read it, here is a repeat of the agenda:

#### Agenda

- What do you see as your Key Result Areas (KRAs)? What would suffer in the club if your position did not exist?
- Relative to your KRAs, what have been your main achievements over the past year and what are the reasons for this?
- Relative to your KRAs, where has your performance not met expectations and what have been the reasons?
- Are any changes necessary to your responsibilities?
- What do you see as your main strengths and limitations? How have these impacted on your performance?
- Once you agree on your KRAs, what objectives or job goals would be appropriate to ensure that your performance will be different/better this time next year as a result of your efforts?
- What training needs do you have in order to enable you to overcome your limitations and to successfully handle the challenges that lie ahead? What personal development programme do you have for yourself?
- How does your team leader need to change his/her management style in order to maximise the relationship?
- What other issues would you like to comment on in relation to your job and/or career?

This agenda leads you through a process of reviewing the past so you can plan and commit to the future. If you haven't already embarked on a performance review process

with your staff, I suggest you get hold of a copy of the January 2006 article and make it a priority to install a system based on the principles outlined in that article.

January is a good time to make new resolutions. You may want to consider getting your team together and asking them individually to write down answers to the following three questions:

*This agenda leads you through a process of reviewing the past so you can plan and commit to the future. If you haven't already embarked on a performance review process with your staff, I suggest you make it a priority.*

- In what areas of operation do you think we can improve the performance of this team for the benefit of members and visitors?
- Why do you believe these areas are important?
- What do think we should have achieved in these areas by this time next year?

Ask each team member to give one of the areas they have written down in answer to question one. There could be duplication which could give an indication of priority; if a number of people raise the same point it is likely to be important.

Once you have exhausted people's lists, explore with the group why they think each point is important and what they would like to achieve by this time next year.

The final stage of the meeting will be to allocate projects to individuals. Each individual who is allocated a project for the

year will have to be given the necessary resources and authority to perform, but once this is done it will be up to that individual to take ownership for the project and to deliver results. He or she will be the project leader.

Positive results will only happen if there is some form of structured support and follow-up. Diarise to meet as a group every two months so the project leaders can give feedback to the group. This will be an opportunity for you as the leader of the team, as well as the group as a whole, to give renewed support for progress made as well as help and advice on the way forward.

Once projects are successfully completed, don't forget to celebrate. Recognition and reward are major components of building future commitment.

It is worth quoting the results of the *Financial Mail's* Best Company to Work For survey for 2006.

You may find these lists helpful in giving pointers for your own projects for the year ahead. Good luck for 2007 and may all your New Year's resolutions turn into reality.

#### **The top five ways to motivate your staff:**

- Development and career opportunities
- Fair reward and recognition
- Leadership by example and through vision
- Open two-way communication
- Treat staff as individuals and with respect

#### **The top five ways to make them run:**

- Unfair remuneration and lack of recognition
- Treating staff like robots, not individuals
- Unequal treatment
- Lousy communication
- No career or growth opportunities



### Is it legal to search employees?

*Andrew Wilson discusses the legalities of searching employees and their belongings on and off work premises.*

**ANY ENVIRONMENT THAT** handles merchandise and cash is vulnerable to theft, and golf clubs are no exception. Are you therefore entitled to search your employees and/or their belongings?

Employers have the right to take whatever legal steps are required in order to protect their assets, and searching is accepted as a valid way of doing this.

However, searching employees and/or their belongings without their consent could be an act of assault or an invasion of their privacy. Therefore, if you carry out a search you need to have the consent of the person you are searching.

In addition to having a searching policy in place or your employees' agreement in their contract to being searched, you have to make sure that your methods of searching are legal and fair. Even if you have a searching policy in place, an employee can refuse to be searched. You would then have to consider whether the employee is in breach of their employment contract. A refusal to be searched could lead to a disciplinary process and possible dismissal for breach of contract.

If you don't have a searching policy in place you would need to get your employees' consent, which can be done at the time of the search or before putting in a searching process. In a retail environment it is considered standard practice to have a searching policy.

#### Searching your employees' parcels and bags

The searching process has to be fair, so you either have to search everyone leaving the premises or search on a random basis.

The fairest and simplest way to do this is to have a bag full of coloured balls; if the employee pulls out a green ball they can proceed without being searched; if they pull out a red ball they must submit to a search.

Don't allow your security person to decide who they think should be searched as they are likely to be accused of being biased.

#### Body searches

The same selection method can be used for body searches. However, you should have a separate private cubicle or room in which the search is carried out. The method of body patting should be used and *must* be carried out by a person who is properly trained to search and who is of the same sex as the person being searched.

What should you do if you are almost certain that an employee has stolen some company property and you don't want to follow the random route, and they refuse

*In addition to having a searching policy in place or your employees' agreement in their contract to being searched, you have to make sure that your methods of searching are legal and fair.*

to submit to a search? You have to inform the employee that you have grounds to believe they are in unlawful possession of company property, and that unless they agree to a search you will call in the police. Before taking this step, however, you must be sure of your facts.

#### Searching lockers

Again you need the person's consent. Providing you have the person's consent it is wise to ensure that you have a witness with you, and that the person concerned is present when you conduct the search. The

reason for this is that if you find something, and the person is not present at the time of the search, they will almost certainly claim that the goods in question were planted.

#### Searching vehicles and/or homes

This deals with searching on your premises, but are you allowed to search people's houses or cars when they are off the premises? Under these circumstances you would need to obtain a court order and the search would have to be carried out by the police. In order to obtain this, you would need firm grounds to convince the authorities that a search was appropriate.

#### Points to consider when implementing a searching policy:

- 1. Consent must be obtained before searching takes place.** This could be as part of the conditions of employment or at the time you wish to carry out the search.
- 2. There should be a valid reason to search.** Either a general policy to protect company assets or because you have grounds to believe that a staff member is in unlawful possession of company assets.
- 3. The searching policy and process must apply to all members of management and staff.** Management are exposed to the opportunities of theft just as much as staff members.
- 4. The searching method must be fair.** Preferably random unless you have grounds to believe a member of your staff is in unlawful possession of company assets.
- 5. The searching method must be legal and fair.** The searchers must be of the same sex as those being searched and must be trained in searching techniques.

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### Summer stress management

*Darren Berry explains the importance of preparing for summer in advance and putting the correct steps in place.*

**THE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL** summer heat-stress management is to take a proactive approach. Pre-summer preparations should begin six to nine months in advance and continue through the summer period.

#### Aeration

One of the most important pre-summer preparations is a sound and comprehensive aeration programme. Hollow-core aeration is especially valuable as it allows for the introduction of an alternate medium with which to amend the current root zone and thereby improve infiltration, root growth or moisture-holding capacity.

Solid-tine aeration is also an extremely valuable tool if used on a regular basis. Solid-tine aeration increases infiltration and improves the soil oxygen levels, thereby promoting healthy turfgrass growth.

There are numerous facets to a successful aeration programme, many of which are sadly under-utilised.

Slicing is a prime example. It is a relatively cheap alternative to hollow-core or solid-tine aeration, yet if used on a regular basis can become a valuable tool in the fight against summer stress. Any action that will break the surface layer and encourage the infiltration of moisture and increase soil oxygen levels will have a positive effect on the turfgrass condition and sustainability.

For those clubs that can afford it, a water-injection aerator or Hydro-Jet may quickly develop into the first-choice 'weapon' against heat stress. The Hydro-Jet injects moisture directly into the root zone, where it is needed most, while also improving soil oxygen levels due to its ability to 'shatter' the top five inches of the soil profile. The Hydro-Jet also challenges the effects of heat stress by applying a wetting agent or plant conditioning agent along with the water injection process.

#### Fertilisation, wetting agents and plant conditioning

Proper fertilisation plays two very important roles. Firstly, it ensures that the turfgrass



**Solid-tine aeration is a valuable tool.**

plant is healthy and therefore better able to compete against pest invasion or heat stress. Secondly, if used correctly and adjusted according to weather conditions, it will assist the turf directly to target weaknesses within its physiology. Potassium assists the turfgrass plant during times of stress but too often fertilisation programmes are left unadjusted prior to, and during, the stressful periods, thereby decreasing the plant's capacity to resist the loss of moisture.

Wetting agents should form an integral part of all maintenance operations. They are an extremely valuable tool in a superintendent's arsenal against heat stress. They improve soil moisture uptake by the plant, increase infiltration and generally improve the effectiveness of all available moisture. If applied as a proactive measure, they can sometimes mean the difference between success and failure. Even applied reactively, wetting agents could mean the difference between having to raid the nursery or not.

There are myriad different products available and not all will provide the same successful results. It is therefore very important that one selects a good quality wetting agent with a proven track record.

Recent studies have shown that selected natural compounds have the ability to increase the turfgrass plant's capacity to combat stress when used as a pre-stress conditioning agent. Two such examples are humic acids and seaweed extracts. One must again be careful when purchasing such products as there are many on the market that do not deliver on their promises. These

products should always be purchased from a reputable supplier and, if possible, with the assistance of a qualified agronomist or soil scientist.

#### Irrigation

Sound irrigation practices and the availability of sufficient irrigation water still remain the number-one factor in determining the successful management of heat stress.

Where limited water availability is a concern, it is obviously especially important that you use water in the most effective and efficient manner possible. One must ensure that the irrigation system is functioning to its maximum capacity and that the moisture is being delivered to its target.

Sound irrigation practices are just as important. Infrequent, deeper cycles should be encouraged over light, frequent applications, thereby promoting deeper root growth. Syringing, either with the irrigation system itself, in large areas, or with hoses to target specific hot-spots, is also an extremely important component. Effective syringing and hand-watering have the ability to save significant amounts of water as well as improve the sustainability and condition of the turf.

If the previously mentioned techniques are implemented along with a sound irrigation and water-management strategy, the summer heat-stress challenges, that all golf courses face, can be combated effectively. A proactive attitude and plan is the first step. Start your summer preparations as early as possible and continue them on a programmed basis, throughout the stressful periods. Remember that healthy turfgrass is always your first line of defence.

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