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A COMPARISON BETWEEN AMERICAN & BRITISH GREENKEEPING

by Ray Richard

LAST YEAR, my father attended the Open at Royal St. George's. There, he bought several copies of **Greenkeeper**. After reading them through, I realized that here was a different view of greenkeeping — one of more common sense and forthright comment.

The American economy is in recession. Most courses have had to trim expenses and, at the same time, deliver equal conditions or acceptable excuses. We are going to need new and innovative ways to combine with our management perspective, which should link the methods of the two biggest golfing areas — American and the United Kingdom.

Golf in America has progressed to the point in lush grass played on by demanding golfers. We have had to spend great amounts of money to obtain better playing conditions but, in the process, we have produced inferior growing conditions.

Demands on American courses have been intensified by television exposure of the bright green appearance of tournament courses. The average golfers can't accept the fact that his course is not similar in condition. It appears that this color-based pressure doesn't exist in the UK.

A few years ago a prominent American

tour professional complained loudly about flyers he was hitting from the beautiful bluegrass fairways he was playing. Suddenly, American greenkeepers were inundated with complaints about flyers. Was this caused by the inability of the player to adapt to the conditions, or should we adapt the conditions to the player?

It appeared to me that the Open course at Royal St. George's was essentially the same course the members play and any modifications from the norm were subtle and not radical. Is there a fine line where we can adapt to the professionals and still provide healthy conditions for our favored species? The answer is a firm 'yes'! The source of our new management assertiveness should be the greenkeepers of the United Kingdom.

The American greenkeeper has to present to his players a course that is neatly mowed, aesthetically pleasing and managed within a budget. He must adapt to many trends that continually arise in American golf and culture. When the Masters is televised, the average golfer is faced with two observations — one good, the other bad. he sees on his color TV the epitome of botanical beauty with every shrub and

CONTINUED PAGE 12

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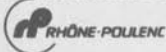
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Those who plan to do their own pruning, should make sure they have on hand appropriate, sharp tools beyond the conventional pruning shears used for twiggy growth. These may include, depending on the work to be done, loppers for small branches and stems, an extension pole pruner for light pruning in tree tops, a pruning saw and perhaps a gas- or electric-powered chain saw for heavier growth.

Here are some suggestions that may be helpful:

- When pruning shade or fruit trees, make all cuts close to the branch or trunk so that no stub remains.
- Where loppers are used, such as on small limbs, cuts will be more easily made by placing the blade below or beside the crotch rather than inside it.
- When severing large branches with a pruning or chain saw, guard against the bark tearing away from the branch as it falls by making a deep undercut about 3 inches out from the trunk, then sever the branch with a full cut from above. Remove the remaining stub by cutting flush with the trunk.

● On fruit trees, the basic goals are to encourage strong crotch development by reducing superfluous growth on branches so the latter can support heavy yields of fruit. Open spaces in the trees allow sunlight and pest sprays to penetrate all parts evenly.

● With ornamental shrubs, prune to eliminate excessive sucker growth, promoting better vigor and keeping them trim and attractive. Cut oldest, woody stems of multistem shrubs down to the ground. This will open the plants to light and air and stimulate new basal growth.

Remember, however, that spring flowering shrubs, such as forsythia, lilac and magnolia, should not be pruned at this time. Wait until they have completed their bloom cycle. These plants produced their flower buds last summer, and any pruning now will diminish their spring displays. Such shrubs as privet, grown only for their foliage or screening effects, may be pruned at any time.

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sulphur and a combination of the two. Some also are a combination of insecticides and fungicides that will control both disease and plant pests. Both are available at most garden centers under various trade names. Label directions should be followed precisely, as certain kinds can be used only on certain trees and shrubs.

Art Kozelka

TURF VIDEO TAPES

Dr. Paul Reike, Shawn McBurney, and Christianne McMillan have been very busy this summer preparing programs for video taping. The video tapes will

cover subjects such as, how to renovate a home lawn, fertilizing and general maintenance of home lawns, general maintenance of athletic fields, renovation for the professional lawn care industry, and cultivation and top dressing techniques for golf courses. The video tapes will be various time lengths from 10 minutes to over 30 minutes. They will be used by the extension service, television stations, small groups, etc. Dr. Reike feels the tapes will certainly fulfil a real need in communicating with the homeowner as well as the turf professional. The cost of the tapes is being shared by the extension service and Michigan Turf-grass Foundation grants.

Merry Christmas from the Editor and Publisher

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FOUR TRAITS OF A SUPER SUPERVISOR

Technical expertise alone does not make a good supervisor. According to effectiveness expert Robert Patchin, supervisors must have four personal traits in order to get the most from their workers:

1) **CANDOR** - If people don't view the boss as trustworthy, they will clam up and become uncooperative. A supervisor who is perceived as less than honest might seem to be working in his own interests rather than the company's.

2) **CONSISTENCY** - Any sign of favoritism quickly destroys the boss' credibility and influence. Particularly where discipline is concerned, fairness is all important.

3) **ACCESSIBILITY** - "It is comforting to know that your boss is available if you have a question or get into

trouble," Patchin advises. But an open-door policy is not enough, nor is mere physical presence. Bosses who are always around may still have a problem with what Patchin calls "mental inaccessibility" . . . they are unsympathetic or only pretend to listen. Workers who receive a curt or uninterested response tend to stop coming back.

4) **PERSONAL COMPETENCE** - although today's boss would be hard put to learn all the subordinates' jobs, he must know enough about their work to recognize good performance when he sees it. He should also be able to provide information, choose materials and secure additional help for special problems. "Today," argues Patchin, "it's more productive to see yourself as the expeditor, not as the boss."

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Comparison, cont.

blade of grass in perfect symmetry. He expects his course to imitate Augusta National, but he is unaware of the time, money and hard work that went into the preparation of this. He is unaware of the pesticides and dyes that are used to create this effect. Wouldn't he be a better golfer if he realized that grass grows best when these things are not applied to it, in a more natural environment?

Instead of the boundary to boundary fairway, we should be promoting a more sensible design — one that punished the golfer more and returns golf to a finesse sport where it belongs. Let us analyze the American golfer, for it is he who keeps the greenkeeper employed. He is usually outfitted with the best clothing and equipment, but poorly outfitted with etiquette and respect for the golf course. American golfers have the preconceived notion that repair of ball marks, traffic routing and divot replacement should be the job of the greens staff. These golfers add to our work by driving golf cars in any direction they want without regard for signs or pathways.

The abuse seen on typical American courses would raise a few eyebrows if seen on one of your hallowed courses. In America, we spend too much time doing chores that the golfer should do — time that could be spent doing the special jobs we are trained for.

You might say: "Why don't we educate our golfers?" The problem is that most golf publications are geared to showing the pastoral beauty of courses and professionals, and rarely lecture or scold the reader for fear that he will stop reading that particular magazine. In these magazines, lavish advertisements show golf cars parked inches from the putting green and perched on tees. Any pictured course shows fantastic condition with that omnipresent intense green color, but never any greens staff or equipment. They glorify the pro golfers who favor scalped greens and fairways. Therefore, it is logical that the average player will try to imitate the pro in game and habit. It appears to me that golfing publications in the UK are more on the side of the

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I am particularly impressed with the amount and design of equipment in the UK. We have several machines that mow vertically and some that remove plugs. However, we don't have access to any machine that goes as deep as you recommend. All equipment manufacturers agree that topdressing, vertical mowing and plug removal is essential to maintaining healthy turf.

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A distinct difference exists between the age of greenkeepers in America and those in the UK. Greenkeepers in America are much younger and better educated in the classroom. It is rare to find a greenkeeper over 40. The reason is that in the States a greenkeeper usually has a family and other responsibilities that necessitate less demanding occupations. These jobs usually provide some retirement and health insurance along with a more secure environment.

I am amazed at the amount of 'seasoned' greenkeepers I have read about in your country. Perhaps they are better treated and respected in UK. All too often we hear about greenkeepers being fired over here, for personal and not performance reasons.

The educational system available to the young greenkeeper appears to be better organized and more extensive in America. We have over a dozen specialized university programs dealing with turf management, which graduate several hundred students every year. These graduates are generally well informed in the technical aspect of

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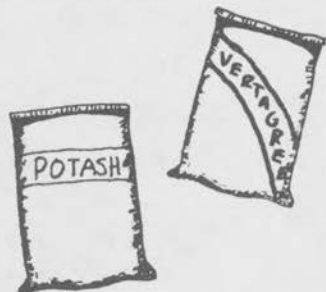
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Comparison, cont.

agronomy, but often lack common sense. They are usually unable to negotiate a price, supervise staff or maintain good public relations at their course. When they fail, there are usually plenty of eager applicants to fill the position.

The American greenkeeper has many magazines at his disposal that deal with golf course management. The problem with these publications is their non-committal perspective on equipment performance, pesticide effectiveness and other issues. The influence on these magazines is biased in favor of advertisers and those in the business of golf.

A factor that impressed me about **Greenkeeper** is the forthright opinion and comment expressed by your writers and readers. In America, the greenkeeper is afraid to express himself in a critical manner. I certainly enjoyed reading the comments to John Campbell and Jim Arthur and perhaps some of the dry technical articles seen in American greenkeeper magazines should be replaced by some writers of the like. The only way we can learn as professionals is to interchange thoughts and react to constructive comment, not defend or ignore it.

The differences I have noted between the countries prove we should attempt to establish greater communications, so we may exchange ideas, produce better conditions and become better greenkeepers. We Americans can learn much from the greenkeepers in the United Kingdom.

This article was reprinted from the October 1982 issue of **Greenkeeper**, a British Golf Course Management Magazine.

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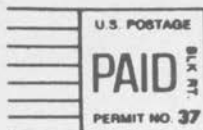
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