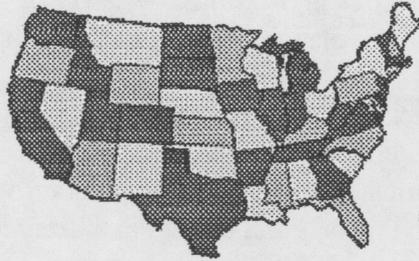


TurfComms

V. 12, I.9



Sept. 24, 2000

PURPOSE: To pass on what we learn willingly and happily to others in the profession so as to improve turf conditions around the country.

Aerification: An Indispensable Tool by Scott Ebers, Supt. Northwood Club an article to be found in North Texas News, July 2000, V.8, I.6 Scott (Dr. Ebers) tells how he is aerifying his greens **monthly** through the long hot Dallas summers and getting away with it. Let me first say that the Northwood Club has about 35,000 rounds of golf on Cato/Crenshaw bentgrass greens and several of these greens do not receive the prevailing South wind the way one would like them to.

Scott writes in the article of either using 1/4 inch side eject tines with the Ryan Greensaire 11's or the solid star tines. The former requires blowing off with back pack blowers and then he rolls with the HydroJect. When using the star drills he only rolls. He claims, after rolling, the holes are only pencil size. He then follows up the next week with a little extra topdressing.

You can do it too. What are you waiting for? Get to it, you know aerification is the answer. So next summer make it part of your program.

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TRAVEL PAYS OFF: Cynthia Maddox agrees to marry me. The trip to Detroit and another made between this issue and last, were made to court this woman. Actually she is a neighbor (lives a mile away), with numerous family members in Greater Michigan. So to get to know her better I helped drive her mobile home up to Detroit in late June where she visits her family, and back again in late July with stops in Stratford, Canada and Niagara Falls along the way. Yea, go figure the latter out. We are planning to get married April 14, 2001.

ANIMAL CONTROL: Yup, I'm back on this perennial problem. I subscribe to Gempler's IPM Solutions email newsletter. Although one must consider that they are trying to sell you the products they carry, there is good information on Canada geese control. Although many products are recommended, they emphasize two things; good timing, and using more than one approach at a time to your control program. If you are a TurfComm subscriber and wish a copy, drop a line or a phone call.

TURFGRASS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION DIRECTORY: This is now in its 3rd edition. Edited by Dr. Keith J. Karnok of Georgia I recommend you consider purchasing a copy for your library. Why? It contains many things you might have in other places, but many you do not. Need to advise a potential turf student programs from correspondence to 4 year degree programs are listed with addresses. Need to put on some training sessions this winter - over 1400 videos, slide sets and software programs are listed. Plant, soil, and water diagnostic labs. are given. Contact info for 500 green industry org. Addresses to University and industry personnel with fax and e-mail addresses. All that and I'm only 1/2 way through the Directory.

It is available from Ann Arbor Press, ATtn.: Skip DeWall, 310 North Main, Chelsea, Michigan 48118, 800-487-2323. price is \$19.95.

SCOTLAND

Jane, my late wife, before she died; had me promise to take a golfing visit to Scotland with my brother, David. I left on this trip September 2, 2000 and returned at the very last hour of September 15th. Inbetween those times we played 9 golf courses for a total of 189 holes. We stayed at 3 hotels and 2 bed and breakfast locations. The journal account of those travels is given below.

But, first let us take a little time to examine Scotland from an agronomist/horticulturist point of view. Scotland is further north than Maine. Almost all of Scotland is above 55° north latitude; essentially the equivalent of being up in the Hudson Bay region of Canada. However, because it is part of an island whose climate is modified by the Gulf Stream it has relatively mild winters. How mild? I found a zone 8 shrub thriving in St. Andrews. Zone 8 plants can winter kill in Dallas during a hard winter, and thus are not often used here. During this September trip I saw

spring planted nasturiums, snap dragons, and sweet peas thriving. While a sunflower in full sunlight had grown to 6 feet but had not yet obtained enough heat/sunlight to flower.

The yearly rainfall (22 to 81 inches is the range of the averages encountered) is not overly heavy but the natives tell you it rains every day in Scotland. It did not rain on us one of our 13 days in Scotland, but I have no doubt it rained somewhere that day in Scotland. The weather is usually cloudy. We did not experience temperatures above 75° during our visit. This is the type of weather cool season grasses thrive in. Especially the more shade tolerant of these the fine fescues and bentgrasses. And that is what I saw along with our friend *Poa annua*. I saw perennial ryegrass on almost all the courses visited but, almost never Kentucky bluegrass. Perennial ryegrass usually appeared in heavy traffic areas but, was not very common.

Journal: Day 1 & 2 (Sept. 2 Saturday, arrived Sunday at 10 A.M. in Glasgow): We arrived sleep deprived from our transatlantic crossing via Iceland. We then rented a car, with steering wheel on the right side and attempted to drive "on-the-wrong-side-of-the-road" to Irvine on the West Coast. This is a little longer than 20 miles and should take one about 40 minutes. It took us 3 hours and 50 miles. We both almost had a nervous breakdown before it was over. Aside from driving on what to most of you is the wrong side of the road after 40 plus years of having driven on the other side we also had the problem of finding our way in a strange land when very tired. A nap, a walk, a beer, and an excellent supper got us to bed in a relaxed state.

Scotland has traffic circles everywhere. Signage was actually excellent once you got used to it. We decided at the start that my brother would be the designated driver and I the navigator. No needed to train two drivers for a two week trip. We always found willing natives to give us directions once off the main highways but, understanding their Scottish brogue was not always easy. Very few roads and highways had shoulders you could pull off on, in order to get your bearings. Roads and highways were, though, in excellent condition.

Day 3: Golf was scheduled for the afternoon so we ate breakfast and roamed Irvine in the A.M. Had no trouble getting to Prestwick Golf Course. Ate lunch there and practiced before our 3 P.M. tee time. Talked briefly with head greenskeeper. He keeps the course in good condition with a seven man crew. Triplex mows greens and essentially does not mow roughs; there was a 15 foot strip of short rough. This course does not have a large acreage in fairways but, there are 100(+/-) bunkers to hand rake. These are medium to small in size. I would say that most bunkers we encountered were small in size by U.S. standards.

This course, as judged by a guy who shot a 98 from the red (middle) tees and was beat by his brother 3 up with 1 to go (3 & 1), to be very difficult. Please note I play on average to a 20+ handicap. I lost only one golf ball to the grose. All other shots in the rough were playable. Grose is a 5 foot or taller shrub covered with stiff thistle like leaves. It not only swallows golf balls it keeps them permanently boundup in its interior. Neither my brother nor I got a ball back from a grose plant.

There were many shots made by me from the rough as the fairways were very narrow and on one 288 yard hole you really played from an adjacent fairway if you couldn't reach the green. The

greens were mostly *Poa annua* rolling about 8.5 on the Stimpmeter scale. The greens were so firm that ball marks were seldom encountered.

This course has a large number of blind shots. Luckily for us we were paired with a twosome one of which was a low handicapper who had played the course nine times before. The bunkers were quite difficult to get out of in most cases. I won one hole because my brother took 3 shots to get out of one.

It was so nice to walk a golf course while playing, and we finished our round in less than 4 hours. Three of our foursome used pull carts. I did not miss the continuous ribbon of 8 foot wide roads so common to most U.S. golf courses. We only visited one course with golf carts. They had four reserved for people with medical disabilities.

Prestwick Golf Course is a style of design essentially no longer used. It appeared that the only earth moved was to dig out bunkers, elevate and level tees, and to a small extent level some green areas.

Day 4: Royal Troon Golf Club - Portland Course: This is a flat fairly easy course after Prestwick. Wider fairways, 2 step cuts before the deep rough, much less grass. Seemed to be just as many bunkers, although only 78, all small. My brother after hitting into his umpteenth bunker during 36 holes said, "just like throwing a shot away." They were indeed difficult to get out of!

The signage was much better on this course with all the irrigation heads (yes, fairways were irrigated) within 250 yards of the greens marked. There was also better directions to the next tee. One sign that read "TROLLEYS THIS WAY" left me puzzled for a bit. Again it was nice to walk a course with pull cart (trolley) and not see roads everywhere.

The greens, tees and fairways appeared to either be getting a little more fertilizer or the soil was a lot richer than at Prestwick. Greens were similar in *Poa* content and a tad slower. Ball marks were encountered but still very firm surfaces by U.S. standards.

The essentially unelevated greens with little pitch if any to front made distance judging of approach shots difficult. I shot 100 on the first go around from the green (middle) tees to be beaten again by my brother 3 & 1. Note again no water holes. Second time around the course after an elegant visitor's buffet luncheon I shot a 94 and won 2 up.

Day 5: We drove to West Gables Golf Course which reminded me some of Prairie Dunes. The wind was a key factor in play. My brother estimated it at 40 mph; I gave it a range between 30 and 50. Balls at the start on the practice green would rock back and forth from the wind. The course played out into the wind for four holes then turned and went with the wind till the fourteenth. About the time you have adjusted your game to playing into the wind you need to reverse procedures. From the fifth hole to the 13th I was dreading the turn back into the wind.

Actually the wind slowed to about 15 mph around the 10th hole but, at the turn, the wind came back up with rain in it. The rain felt like wet sand grains hitting your face. The rain lasted for one hole and then returned for another brief bout before we finished. I have never hit so many punch shots in my life in one round.

The course had the dunes of Prestwick but you played between them instead of over them, or off tees on the dunes and into the valleys between. There was very little grose but the tall rough was very dense. I lost two balls on the front nine when playing into the wind. Only lost one ball on each of the previous two courses.

The turf appeared to be mostly bentgrass on greens, tees and fairways with some Poa, and fine fescues. But, to be truthful, most of my attention was focused on the wind. Yet, I did note that both greens and many traffic areas had been recently seeded to fine fescues. I noted the tees here were generally much leveler than those on the first two golf courses. Fairways were generally of adequate width (30+/- yards) with 7-10 yard step cut of short rough.

Holes 5 - 13 play along Irvine Bay (Firth of Clyde) where white caps were very evident. Overall, I felt that West Gailes was the best course by far, of the three courses played to date, but shot a 121 and lost 3 & 1 to David.

There was no trouble finding the next tee on this course but in an ordinary day I would have appreciated yardage on irrigation heads as at Troon. Did encounter water on two holes. On the eighth I didn't realize it was there until in it. In both cases it was merely a ditch crossing in front of the green.

Day 6: Drove northeast to Dornoch. The drive through Glasgow was made without any problems during morning rush hour. The slow moving traffic made reading highway signs and making decisions easy. The remaining 200 miles was really easy for both driver and navigator.

Day 7: We had a 7:20 A.M. tee time at Royal Dornoch. This had us on the golf course without breakfast. The first eight holes were played with a 15 mph wind at our backs. Essentially no dew but greens got faster as they dried out. I estimated Stimpmeter speeds to be in the 9&1/2 to 10 foot range. The greens were large (over 5000 sq. ft.) and made to appear larger with 8 foot collars. They were very nice and essentially as firm as the Troon course. They were about a 50:50 mix of Poa and bentgrass.

Fairways were wide with a real tight playing surface. I paced what I thought was an average one at 34 yards. Roughts were 5 yards of mowed grass, then tall grass and some grose. The grose was not a major problem. By the time we reached the 8th hole the wind had picked up to 25 mph and turning into it for the last 10 holes made it a major problem for us.

This course with its elevated tees and greens is a fun course to play, and was my favorite of the ones played. And that is from a guy (me) who only shot a 101 from the yellow tees but, beat his brother 3 & 2. Only two really blind shots. I did lose 2 golf balls here. Some of the prettiest and rankest growing nasturiums I have ever seen were cascading 2 feet down a wall at the clubhouse.

The superintendent had used artificial turf on steps up the elevated tees and in some heavy traffic areas that were out of play, including one foot path from the 18th green to clubhouse area. A similar use of artificial turf was also seen at the Carnoustie Championship Course.

After walking around Dornoch for several hours we drove about 50 miles to the new Aigas Golf Course. This is a par 33, 2439 yard wide open beginners course off Highway A831 and adjacent to the River Beaully. This course had bunkers you could hit out of but greens that were too small and mowed down the banks to make them appear larger. It was a good break from the tough caliber of courses we had been playing. We had a tied match for nine holes with 43s. I managed my only birdie for the trip on a par 3. Greens were slow and soft.

Day 8: This was suppose to be a day of travel only, according to our tour arranger, Prestique, printed itinerary. We left immediately after a Scottish breakfast and stopped at Blair Castle for a break, sight seeing and lunch. Arrived at the Carnoustie Golf Course Hotel at 2:45 P.M. to find our room had been changed from one with 2 twin beds to one with a double; and that we had a tee time at 3:30 P.M. for the Championship Course. These were the only two mixups on our trip. These two foul ups probably influenced my feeling for this course.

We played from the forward men's tees. This shortens each hole immensely, for example by 88 yards on # 18 a par 5 and 45 yards on a par 3. Small streams come into play five times during the 18. I managed to find the bottom of them 3 times. The wind was not too bad starting off at about 15 mph and dropping to less than 5. Two or three holes were played into the 15 mph wind.

The fairways at landing areas were relatively wide with 5 yards of close mowed rough and another 5 yards of 2&1/2 to 3 inch rough, than the tall grass. A small amount of heather and grose were present. I found the grose once for my only lost ball. Fairways were more undulating I thought than the other courses played. Tees and greens are slightly elevated; over all land surface was flat.

The grass on tees, greens and fairways appeared to be *Poa annua* and bentgrass. Roughts had a lot of fine fescues. Greens were firm with few ball marks and at a 8&1/2 to 9 foot Stimpmeter speed; nice and smooth. While greens were gently to moderately undulating the practice green was perfectly flat.

I shot a 45 on the front nine, 53 on the second. My brother and my match play ended even, as my game fell apart, his improved over the 18. I'm sure this golf course is a very good test from the back tees; but I didn't come away impressed with it the way I did the Royal Dornoch. The course was not marked for yardage except at the tees. You needed the yardage guide booklet to get around or a caddie. I did not always find the guide accurately depicting the holes. The 109 bunkers were humbling, even fairway bunkers often required sand wedge shots out. But, my game, not the golf course humbled me on this day.

Day 9: The first warm (70s+) day, sunny and no wind - didn't play golf. Went walking before breakfast and then went to the Scone Palace. Took my first and only slides here.

Day 10: We meet Alan Holmes, manager of golf course maintenance of the Blairgowrie Golf Courses, in the late morning. We spent quite a bit of time quizzing him about his course and things we had observed in Scotland mostly on other courses. In the afternoon we played the Rosemount Golf Course as his guest. There was very little wind, no sun, but a steady rain. It was a steady light to moderate rain that had been falling long enough to saturate the soil and cause puddles everywhere. We were soaked after 4 or 5 holes. We weren't even able to keep the score card dry, although I did manage to keep it legible for the first nine (49). We did a better job of keeping track of the match play - my brother won 4 & 2.

This is the only wooded course we played. We two New Englanders felt really at home. Tees were slightly elevated and greens sometimes had the backs elevated. Fairways were relatively flat and wide. There was up to 20 feet of mowed rough at 1 & 3/4 inches, I believe. Then there was unmowed rough of heather, brome and/or trees, no grose. Did not lose a ball all day playing yellow tees and double boogie golf. The course is 6222 yards long from the yellow and par 71 compared to 6590 , par 72 from the white tees.

Fairways, tees, and greens appeared to be creeping bent and *Poa annua*. Greens were probably normally firm but ball marked regularly in the rain and I plugged a ball on the 18th with a full sand wedge shot. Even as early as the first hole there was standing water on some portions of the greens and cups were full. There was also some standing water on fairways.

It was very easy to judge distances and find your ball because now you had trees lining both sides of the fairway and providing a backdrop behind the green as well. The tall dark trees made it easier to follow a ball up and down. Bunkers were easy to get out of. I speak from 3 such experiences. There were 80 bunkers out there according to the shot guide. We played the yellow (forward tees).

Day 11: We washed clothes and walked the City of St. Andrews visiting the Golf Museum along the way. In the afternoon we each hit a large bucket of balls at the driving range, a day of rest.

Day 12: Gasoline is becoming hard to obtain; farmers and others are complaining about the high price of gasoline (\$4+/gal - 80% of this is taxes) and showing their anger by block exits from petroleum refineries. Luckily we had just filled our tank so we drove to nearby Cupar to play the Cupar C.C. founded in 1855. The course is on the side of a "cardiac hill". Holes 2 thru 6 work their way up the side of the hill; while 7, 8 & 9 bring you back down. My brother commented that the course was "an uphill battle". One that he won as I shot a 46, 47, 44, & 42 to lose to my brother 3 & 2 for the morning 18, and 2 & 1 in the afternoon. The seventh and eighth holes have fairways that appear to be slanted 30°. You got some practice hitting side hill shots, the ball either higher than your feet or below. The course is a short nine holes, 2537 yards from the white tees which we played. Adequate to wide fairways and about 8 foot of short mowed rough, and then the taller hay. The wind was less than 5 mph. It never rained, and the sun shone a little. For Scotland it was a darn good day to play golf.

The tees were slightly elevated. The turf on them fine fescue and bentgrass. The fairways were a similar combination. The short roughs were mostly fine fescues. The greens were 3 - 5,000 sq. ft. but, they were often cut into the side of the hill which made for difficult approach shots and very difficult putts to read. Greens were firm with about an 8 & 1/2 Stimpmeter speed and consisted of *Poa annua* and bentgrass. Holes 3, 4, 5 & 7 had a wall crossing them which had been toppled to give you about a two foot high inverted V-shaped barrier. It mostly had just enough soil on it to grow half way decent grass. Membership cost 140 pounds, about \$210/year. Blairgowrie's membership was in the 3 to 400 pound range, if I remember correctly. Perhaps retiring in England might be a good idea.

Bunkers were relatively mild except for 3 out of 5 on # 9. There were about 3 bunkers/hole and they did not generally cause concern. Maintenance sheds like proshops were small; this one was 10 x 40'. There was no proshop. The maintenance crew was a greenskeeper and a young student. There were a few blind and semi-blind shots from tees and fairways. The worst was the first hole, a par 3 with 2 small greenhouses waiting if you hit it long.

Day 13: Great Britain now had about 80% of the petrol stations without fuel. We drove to Edinburgh, stopping to play golf when the morning rains stopped. This was another short course, the Elie Sports Club nine; which was adjacent to the Elie Golf Club. It was similar to the Cupar C.C. course in length (2177 yds) but was on relatively flat terrain. The only blind shot was the tee shot on the first hole which was a par 4. the course had 2 to 3 small bunkers/hole and only moderate rough. The grass on greens, tees and fairways was mostly fine fescue and bentgrass. This was the only course where I saw a large amount of fine fescue on the greens. Only the greens were irrigated. The greens were 3 to 4,000 sq. ft. and at about an 8 foot Stimpmeter reading. They were firm but would leave a ballmark from a well hit 8, 9, or wedge. Brother Dave said that a ball hitting them "sounded like it was hitting an oak floor." I played fair golf but lost 4 and 2 for 18 holes.

Day 14: Our goal was simply to get to the Glasgow airport with the gas we had in the tank. This we did. We actually pulled off the main highway once looking for gas so as to turn the car in with a full tank but could not find a petrol station and didn't want to run out of gas looking for one. The trip to the Glasgow airport was a snap compared to trying to leave it 13 days previously.

One thing I began to realize as we went from course to course was the relatively small size of the proshop. The Scottish golf professionals appeared to have a lot less prestige and power than their U.S. counterparts.

SUMMARY: The Scottish link style courses take some getting used to. They are generally difficult to judge distances on. Their superintendents do not have the large budgets many U.S. superintendents get to work with but they generally have much better growing conditions. If you would like to play golf in "the kingdom" I strongly recommend Royal Dornock and West Gales. My brother strongly recommends you do not do your own driving. Certainly at the more economical and less known golf courses in Scotland you get your money's worth. I'm sure St. Andrews can charge 10 times more only because of its long and famous history.

END