

MOVING ON

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We think that the only way to progress is to keep on learning. To have an understanding of any situation we all need to try to appreciate it as fully as possible. With the Disturbance Theory we have been trying to give you a better appreciation of how nature works. This simple model describing the plant growth strategies gives an insight into the sward dynamics. Species development requires you to be able to manage change. The theory aims to give interested greenkeepers a simple framework to work to. The other articles cover the philosophy and management strategies in detail. This is about making progress.

You may have been wondering why we have been speaking up on the subject of favouring the finer grasses in golf greens. This area has tended to create more enemies than friends in recent years, both golfers and greenkeepers alike. Well, at the very start of all this was a good read of Jim Arthur's "Practical Greenkeeping". The book inspired us to have the courage of our conviction and we re-wrote, "Changing the Nature of your Greens". It offers a different way of thinking.

With the enthusiasm surrounding The R & A's Sustainability concept we decided to write some more articles to explain the logic (and work it out for ourselves). The series was named The Disturbance Theory to prick your interest. We wanted you to create better putting surfaces by achieving the development of the finer grasses and without compromising on playing quality. Happy golfers and happy greenkeepers are at our heart. The fine grass principle is important to our profession.

Writing the articles was a good way of testing the ideas in open scrutiny. You can't knock us for hiding our light away. With positive feedback from the experts (greenkeepers mainly) the ideas were encouraged to develop. One article led to another and the concept took its shape. The articles on the website have been ordered from "Changing the Nature of your Greens" to allow the reader to follow the progression. This article will be placed at the end in a couple of months.

At the heart of all this, we've been writing these articles to become better agronomists. How to promote the finer grasses in golf greens without compromising on playing quality is *the* big question and it needs answering. To be worth our salt we needed to come up with something. The articles are our answer on the subject. We tried. They have been our personal breakthrough and we hope they help with yours.

The 2007 Carnoustie Open greens were also a breakthrough. The greenkeepers there are a gifted and visionary bunch. Their greenkeeping calls them and they are ambitious. In January 2006, they read, "Changing the Nature of your Greens" and reappraised their situation. The target was to increase the level of fescue in the greens to make them completely authentic. After discussing the implications of the article, it was decided to reduce the level of disturbance pressure to create an environment more suited to the development of the fescue. They formulated a plan to ease back on the cutting heights, to only verticut if necessary and prepare the surfaces primarily through brushing, top dressing, hand mowing and rolling. Overseeding was scheduled for late summer and again in mid autumn (after the Dunhill). When making these changes the playing quality couldn't be compromised in any way. The Carnoustie golfers know what they want and with The Open looming the greenstaff were working within an extremely testing confine. Judging by the magnificent performance of the greens for the Open (they were even better for this years Dunhill!) and with the fescue increasing apace they can be happy to have passed the test. The verticutters have remained in the shed. This is an example of fantastic modern greenkeeping. They are well on their way and the Carnoustie boys can take a bow as they go.

It is often thought botanical progression can only be made on the links. Not so, things are moving forward in all areas, even the parkland. The aim here is for browntop bent instead of the fescue but the principles remain the same. Things will move if you let them. Just ask the greenkeepers who are trying this way what happens. They don't compromise on playing quality because it isn't necessary. The greens get better.

If anything the DT way of thinking has taken stock over the last 18 months and it is simple greenkeeping is coming back, loud and clear. This is what *you* think. Simple method, hard work, learning skill and timing are the keys to progress. No miracles. Our learning finds the right answer in the end. Greenkeeping is back with the greenkeepers. It's time to move on.