Greenkeeper’s Revenge

It’s not just amongst the paid ranks that the period of recuperation in the golfing season has started. Barring a few pre Christmas Scrambles and the like, it’s also a quieter time of year at most golf clubs. But whilst the golf course and green keepers do their best to stand up to the worst that the seasons can throw at them, there are still a number of die hard golfers who insist on playing whatever the weather. Naturally, soggy fairways, muddy fringes, and winter standard greens aren’t conducive to great scoring, so perhaps the odd traditional stableford and medal formats could be shelved for a week in favour of an entirely different golfing beast. How about a competition that inspires a more social atmosphere and larger participation levels from the membership? I’m talking about the ‘Greenkeeper’s Revenge’. Probably not an event found on the fairways at Augusta, but one that a number of golf clubs in this country have already hosted with great success. For the unversed, perhaps I can shed a little light on the concept.

Greenkeepers have it tough. From the moment dawn breaks they’re under constant threat from lawnmower homing golf balls, ear bashings regarding the state of the course, and decisions to close holes or move to temporary greens. In many ways, they’re on a complete hiding to nothing.

The ‘Greenkeepers Revenge’ gives them the chance to put the shoe on the other foot. In short, they are given carte blanche to set up the golf course as never seen before. In a move akin to that of allowing tables, chairs, and ladders in the World Wrestling Arena, the use of tractors, trailers, fake holes, and dirty pin positions is a prerequisite to the concept of the ‘Greenkeeper’s Revenge’ and indeed it is actively encouraged. It’s an opportunity for retribution on all of those derogatory comments regarding hollow tining, and the state of the course.

For one day in the year, the Greenkeepers do away with the text books. They create a golf course for the members to take on that will test their patience, abilities, and sense of humour. Revenge is the name of the game, so the goal of the ‘Greenies’ will doubtless be to infuriate the competitors. It might sound like carnage, and in many senses it is, but these guys know what they’re doing and can certainly be trusted not to compromise the golf course. Golfers won’t have seen or played in anything like it, such us the uniqueness of the course, so fun, frustration, and a heightened sense of enjoyment are guaranteed. The best format (for purposes of sanity) is probably Texas Scramble. Without it, you could be playing all day. For example, anyone that drives a golf ball under a tractor wheel is probably going to require a ‘get out of jail card’, and the Texas Scramble format permits it. The social benefits of the Texas Scramble add to the concept as well, as teams conjure up methods of negotiating a path around the many obstacles and trickery in place.

It’s doubtless one of the most memorable competitions I’ve played in, from the green with no flag to the obstructing trailer across the middle of the fairway. Tee boxes in the rough and holes cut on an upslope. Every hole has a talking/stumbling point, and whilst ordinarily the post competition chat in the bar is routinely filled with boring anecdotes such as *‘you should’ve seen Dave’s drive on 12’* or *‘what about that bounce you got on 15’*, the conversations centre around a tractor blocking the approach to the par 3, or the pin cut 12 inches from the edge of the 18th green, and they’re topics that everyone in the competition can relate to. Unsurprisingly, it rightly becomes an extremely popular feature of the golfing calendar.

Admittedly, it’s not a weekly or even monthly competition, but it’s perhaps a welcome one off alternative to a winter stableford or medal competition. I love the traditional formats of golf, but I’ll equally recognise that not every competition has to influence handicap. It’s of equal importance to put on events that encourage every member to play, and facilitate a lively clubhouse environment where golfers want to stay longer and discuss their game. It’s a vital part of golf club life too, for both the club and the members. Not only that, but the green keepers love it. I guarantee that an event like this will provide them with some welcome gratitude from the golfers, whilst showcasing what a superb job they do on a daily basis.