

## Will Collins' Blog

The World Cup, Tennis and Insects

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Well, it's all football and tennis at the moment – with the World Cup, Queens (just finished) and soon Wimbledon. It was good to see the latest issue of The Groundsman publishing a world exclusive interview with Real Madrid's Head Groundsman Paul Burgess – as well as presenting an intriguing insight into the lives of the Wimbledon groundscrew team during their tournament. If you are not an IOG member and therefore don't receive the monthly magazine, you don't know what you're missing! Of course, you can purchase individual copies, but as a contributor to the magazine I would (naturally!) suggest that the information being provided each month by the magazine alone is worth more than the cost of an annual IOG subscription.

Talking of the World Cup – and I know it is early days – I'm still debating whether the BBC or ITV are winning in the race to provide the best pre-match coverage and in-match commentary. My initial impression is that both channels seem to devote an extraordinary amount of time to the build-up. Bloggers' views welcome here...

Did anyone pick up on the recent initiative by Prince William to save 2,012 playing fields for the Queens Diamond Jubilee? The industry has been watching the gradual erosion of playing fields for some years now (in my area, the opening of sites with 'rentable' artificial surfaces seem to be over-subscribed) so Royal intervention can only be a good thing. I'm sure the IOG will keep us updated with the progress.

Finally, has anyone (especially our overseas friends) any knowledge or first-hand experience about the psyllid, the sap-sucking Asian insect which is being introduced to the UK to combat Japanese knotweed? The Government announced in March that the insect may be released into the UK, and I understand that scientists at the Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International have been given licence to introduce psyllid at two sites, then watch progress for some months.

PS: The editor tells me that next issue of the magazine (Sports Turf, Amenity & Leisure) will feature insights into the groundscrew routines for The Open (golf) and Goodwood (horse racing), among others.

4th April 2010

Every cloud has a silver lining, so they say, and the dreadful weather we've had since Christmas has kept me (and my mower) off my grass at home – and to an extent at work. However, the spring bulbs are breaking through and it won't be long before we're hard at it balancing the science of turf maintenance with users' ever-increasing demands for tip-top surfaces, whatever the level of usage!

My 2010 calendar has also flagged up the start of the World Cup (June 11), IOG SALTEX (September) and the IOG National Conference and Industry Awards as the must-see events of the year. On the first count, let's hope Wayne Rooney's great goal-scoring form carries into the summer and, on the second, I wonder what impact (if any?) the general election (in May?) will have?

Annual budget constraints are, I'm afraid, something most of us have to live with, but the threat of VAT increases, for example, simply adds a bit more pressure! That said, a visit to the Windsor show should not solely be regarded as an occasion to spend money. Every year I see equipment and products that will actually save me (and my employers) money.

This year's IOG Conference and Awards will be a fantastic occasion if they match the success of last year's event (and I'm sure they will!). The Awards are just what we need to celebrate industry success, much of which goes unsung certainly in the public eye. But with the IOG's continued efforts to raise industry's profile (which includes the Awards) and the London Olympics on the horizon, there's never been better opportunities for the groundscrew sector to gain much-deserved credibility in the wider world.

Roll-on 2010!

Will Collins