

Breaking eggs...

If you've played in the past week, it would be impossible not to notice that significant renovation of the Greens has commenced.

In 20 years of Greenkeeping, I have never before carried out such intensive work to the putting surfaces. Although, I am in no doubt of the benefits this aeration work will produce.

Stage 1:

Is to apply a heavy layer of sand to the surface (around 3 tons per Green).

This is carried out first to minimise 'wheel rutting' from the heavy top-dresser. Wheel rutting would occur if the dressing were to be applied after the surface has been destabilised by the following intensive aeration. It also helps to minimise 'bridging' of the material when filling aeration holes later in the program.



Stage 2:

Is to verti-drain the surface with a 1" solid tine to 12" deep at 4" spacing.

The remaining sand on the surface is then drag-matted into the holes, effectively creating thousands of sand passages through the root-zone, improving drainage & rooting characteristics. This process also lifts the profile of the surface through 'heave' letting air into the root-zone and allowing gaseous exchange.



Stage 3:

Is to remove surface material through use of a 3/4" hollow-core, to 3.5" deep at 1.5" spacing.

These 'cores' are then drag-matted to separate the unwanted fibrous material from the soil. The remainder of the cores are then boarded off the surface & the soil is then dragged back into the core holes along with any remaining sand. This process has multiple benefits but primarily it removes a percentage of Organic Matter or 'thatch' from the surface, which recent analysis has shown to be very high at Royal Norwich G.C. Thatch, amongst other things, harbours disease & holds onto moisture in the surface of the grass plant, leading to poor drainage characteristics & soft, spongy Greens - particularly in the winter.



This is followed up by over-seeding, further sand dressing & fertiliser application to 'brim' any remaining holes & return the surface to an acceptable standard as quickly as possible. Hopefully this will see a truer, firmer & healthier putting surface as a result.



Such intensive work can only be carried out whilst adequate soil temperatures & light levels are still prevalent - the main reason this work was carried out in August. This should guarantee quick recovery & a good coverage heading into the cooler months.

To demonstrate the speed of recovery, it is worth noting that a virtually identical process was carried out on the Approaches only 3 weeks ago. A similar program is planned for the Teeing areas over the coming weeks too.

Unfortunately with weather & machinery issues last week, we were unable to complete this renovation work on the Greens. I am hopeful that with a little help from Mother Nature & a good tail wind, we will complete the task early this week.

Thank you for your continued support & patience whilst this disruptive work is being carried out... I am certain we will reap the benefits in the coming months.

Mike Barney
Head Greenkeeper