

The logo for STRI (Scottish Turf Research Institute) features the letters 'STRI' in white, bold, sans-serif font. The text is set against a dark green rectangular background that has a subtle, stylized pattern of grass blades or turf tufts.

Seascale Golf Club

Advisory Report on the Golf Course

Report Date: 10th June 2016

Consultant: Ian Craig

Seascale Golf Club

Date of Visit: 19th May 2016

Visit Objective: To review the prevailing condition of the course and confirm ongoing maintenance requirements.

Present: Mr Stuart Hemmings – Club Manager
Mr John Whitham – Head Greenkeeper
Mr Ian Craig – STRI Ltd

Weather: 11°C & overcast

Headlines

- A very wet winter followed by a cold dry spring has presented a very difficult set of early season conditions.
- The greens were somewhat unrefined at the time of inspection owing to the challenging conditions.
- Annual meadowgrass seedhead activity was high at the time of the visit and this was compromising ball roll.
- Fescue populations are pleasing throughout the greens, with a good blend of grasses present to most surfaces.
- The drying winds have resulted in drought stress conditions to the more exposed areas of the course in particular, tees and fairways.
- The wet winter has served to highlight a number of areas throughout the course which are in need of traffic management to avoid issues with compaction and a loss of grass cover.
- Areas of long rough have become overly dense with high populations of coarse grasses and will require more intensive management.

Key Actions

- Continued fescue overseeding is required throughout the greens to improve sward species composition.
- Overseeding should be intensified to weaker areas of greens and should be supplemented with browntop bent where necessary.
- Targeted aeration should be carried out to the heavily trafficked parts of greens to relieve compaction.
- Additional fertiliser applications should also be made to weaker sections of greens to accelerate recovery from winter play.
- Traffic management should be implemented to high traffic routes, particularly during wet periods in order to reduce compaction and compromised grass cover.
- Wetting agent applications are required to selected areas throughout the course where drought stress has become evident.
- A programme of rough management should be implemented to deliver a finer textured sward in localised areas of the course.

Photo Observations and Comments



Figure 1: Annual meadowgrass seedhead was evident throughout the greens and this was impacting negatively on ball roll qualities.



Figure 2: Soil moisture was generally very uniform and drier conditions will tend to favour the finer grasses. Some localised patches on greens demonstrated very low moisture readings and targeted hand watering is required.



Figure 3: Fescue populations are thriving on the 11th green and a very uniform sandy profile was noted beneath the surface. Windblown sand from the dunes is providing natural topdressing which would indicate that increased sand inputs would greatly benefit all greens.



Figure 4: Concentrated foot traffic and use of caddy carts throughout the winter has resulted in compacted soil and compromise grass cover to a number of green surrounds. This will result in discrepant surfaces and inconsistent lies.



Figure 5: The front of the 12th tee has been used throughout the winter resulting in a thin, weak sward ahead of the main season.



Figure 6: Marram planting around the 15th green and 16th tee has added a superb visual aesthetic to the area as well as diverting foot traffic away from the green surround.

Photo Observations and Comments (continued)



Figure 7: The rough in between the 11th & 12th fairways has become overly dense and colonised by coarser grasses such as perennial ryegrass and Yorkshire fog. This will require some increased management over the upcoming years in order to refine the sward and deliver a fairer challenge to the errant golf shot.



Figure 8: The mild, wet winter has provided favourable conditions for perennial broadleaved weeds. A selective herbicide application should be made during a period of strong growth.



Figure 9: Dry soils and heavy compaction has resulted in a loss of grass cover to a number of sections of fairway.



Figure 10: Locally sourced sand is screened and stored onsite, providing an excellent topdressing material.

Recommendations

Greens

- Sand topdressing inputs should be increased to 100 tonnes/ha/year. This will help to retain surface firmness and ball roll qualities as well as continually diluting surface organic matter as it accumulates.
- Beneath the surface the greens generally exhibit a good, consistent sandy profile with evidence of good sand topdressing practices. The focus should be to continue the development of the fescue content of the sward by increasing the sand topdressing inputs and keeping the surface disruption to a minimum. Organic matter should be suitably controlled by regular sand topdressing and this should negate the need to hollow core or scarify for the time being. Heavier dressings can be applied following solid tine aeration and verti draining in order to incorporate sand down through the soil profile.
- Fescue overseeding should continue throughout the growing season to continue the development of a more favourable botanical composition. The weaker areas of greens would also benefit from additional overseeding with browntop bent in an effort to achieve a full grass cover.
- The weaker areas are generally those which receive the highest levels of foot traffic and targeted aeration is required to these areas to relieve compaction.
- Additional fertiliser inputs will also be required to the weaker areas to strengthen the turf and accelerate recovery.
- A drier soil profile will help to favour the development of the finer grasses and irrigation inputs should be limited to hand watering of high spots and areas where drought stress is common.

Fairways

- The lack of fairway irrigation coupled with dry windy conditions through the spring months have resulted in some drought stress symptoms to a number of the more exposed fairways. Applications of wetting agent should be made to selected fairways to aid moisture retention and reduce the risk of drought stress occurring. Aquatrols fifty90 would be a suitable and cost effective product for this purpose. An application at 50l/ha should provide suitable moisture retention for a ninety day period.

Green Surrounds

- These surfaces generally exhibited suitable grass cover with good levels of presentation. The exceptions were common traffic routes such as walkways between green and tee where high levels of foot traffic and the use of caddy carts during wet weather have given rise to high levels of compaction, reduced grass cover and therefore discrepant lies in sensitive areas around the greens. More intensive management of these areas is required.
- The implementation of traffic management such as the use of ropes or hoops to exclude excess traffic would be recommended during wet weather and in particular during the winter months.
- More intensive aeration and verti-draining would be required in order to alleviate compaction and where possible, sand topdressing should be applied in order to improve the soil structure, increase drainage capacity and provide a more stable and durable surface.
- Consideration should also be given to the use of the Air2G2 air injection unit which would be particularly effective in alleviating some of the more deep seated compaction.
- Additional granular fertiliser should also be applied to these areas to strengthen the turf and accelerate recovery from wear.
- The potential for winter tee construction was also discussed and we would suggest that consideration be given to the introduction of winter tees in alternative locations in an effort to effectively manage the traffic around the greens during the wetter winter months.

Rough Management

- The long rough is important to a number of areas of the golf course in providing a challenging but fair penalty to the errant golf shot as well as providing definition and a suitable visual aesthetic to holes. The rough in certain areas of the course, such as between the 11th & 12th fairways has become overly dense with high populations of coarser grasses and can often result in an unplayable lie or a lost ball. Management of long rough is essential to provide the desired texture.
- The areas in question should be cut down on an annual basis (September/October) and the clippings should be removed. Removal of the clippings is essential to reduce the biomass of these roughs and produce the finer, wisper texture that is desired.
- The area should then be scarified in order to further reduce the biomass and nutrient content of the soil, thereby favouring the finer grasses. This process can be repeated in the spring where necessary.
- If necessary, the removal of coarser grasses could be accelerated by an application of Rescue graminicide. Care must be taken when applying the graminicide as there must be suitable populations of finer grasses to avoid large areas of bare ground.

Broadleaved Weed Control

- The mild winter has provided suitable conditions for the proliferation of perennial broadleaved weeds such as daisy. At the time of inspection, daisy populations were high and this was impacting negatively on the visual aesthetic of a number of areas on the course. An application of selective herbicide is required during a period of strong growth. If necessary a repeat application can be made to selected areas where populations are particularly high.

Signed



Ian W Craig BSc (Hons), MBPR
Turfgrass Agronomist, STRI Ltd

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