

Dear Members

These past three weeks the team have been busy carrying out numerous works around the golf course. This time of year is always tough as temperatures are still low and we are awaiting warmer temperatures to help increase soil temperatures so consistent grass growth can occur. Soil temperatures need to reach 11-12 degrees Celsius, In my experience this does not usually happen until mid-April. Once temperatures reach the target range we are then able to start work on the playing surfaces and expect to see the greens, approaches and fairways recover from the Leather Jacket, Chafer Grub and Crow damage seen throughout the winter months. We have made improvements on the putting surfaces but there is still some movement of the ball when putting through the damaged areas, this will only improve once the turf starts actively growing.

Two weeks ago after essential aeration practices on the greens of the Air 2 G2 we decided to give a light scarify to the putting surfaces to help reduce the organic matter accumulation. I have seen on a previous consultancy report that the organic matter content in the top 40mm is around 7%. This isn't bad but is on the high side of good. My aim in the coming years is to reduce this to around 4%.

Scarification removes unwanted lateral growth and dead plant material and opens up the surface for topdressing sand to mesh in to. Slicing the grass surface helps encourage the grass to grow upright resulting in a truer, faster putting surface.

Scarification removes thatch which is a buildup of organic matter and is comprised of dead grass, leaves, shoots, roots and stolon's.

We took three Buggy loads of organic matter out of the 11,000M2 of putting surface here at L'Ancrese. This is a promising start for February when the practices were carried out.



Organic matter removed from six greens



Surfaces scarified and awaiting topdressing to fill voids and further dilute organic matter content

L'ancresse will apply top dressing to greens monthly with the total area of all greens being eleven thousand meters square. A total of a 100 tons of sand is used annually on all twenty one greens. I hope in the coming years we are able to increase this to 125 tons per annum. The sand is shipped to Guernsey from a quarry on the British mainland as the local sand is of a fine particulate size and if used would cause issues within the greens rootzone, drainage capabilities, root breaks, inter packing etc.

Top dressing aids in the dilution of organic matter, regains surface smoothness, firms the putting surfaces and creates smooth consistent surfaces. A heavier application is always carried out after core cultivation to exchange the soil, further dilute organic matter build up and to regain surface smoothness, this will be carried out in the Autumn maintenance week.

Light rates of topdressing are preferred for quality putting surfaces.

After the application of top dressing I am pleased to report that the majority of holes within the putting surfaces that have been left open since October last year have been filled with sand. We still need good consistent growth and another dusting of sand in 3-4 weeks and we should have regained complete surface smoothness. An overseeding practice on the putting surfaces in April may be warranted to help colonize the weak areas of certain greens from the Leather Jacket, Chafer Grub and Crow damage.



14 Ton of Top dressing applied to 21 Greens



Sand being worked in to the canopy using an astro turf drag matt

Pests

L'Ancrese has an extensive pest problem and is under attack from all areas around the course. I feel we must address these areas as a priority. Once we are able to get the pest problem under control vast improvements will be made to the overall surface quality, playability and general aesthetics of the course.

This will not be an easy task and many avenues must be explored on ways to go about controlling Leather Jacket and Chafer Grub infestations. Unfortunately the European Union in recent years banned all chemicals that treated these turf pests.

Recently the U.K. Government and Jersey Government authorized an emergency use Insecticide for golf courses, race tracks and other sports turf areas. This pesticide will also gain full approval within the next year or two due to the devastation these pests are causing across the U.K.

Unfortunately Guernsey's Environment Department has not approved this pesticides use. Although I have been in regular contact and have recently written to them highlighting our situation. I am hopeful permissions will be granted that at the very least we are able to treat our putting surfaces as significant expenditure is spent each year on the maintenance of these surfaces that will be devastated every winter by these pests.

Unfortunately if we do not get approval I can only see this problem getting worse in the coming years and golfers will have to adapt to poor playing conditions which is out of our control.

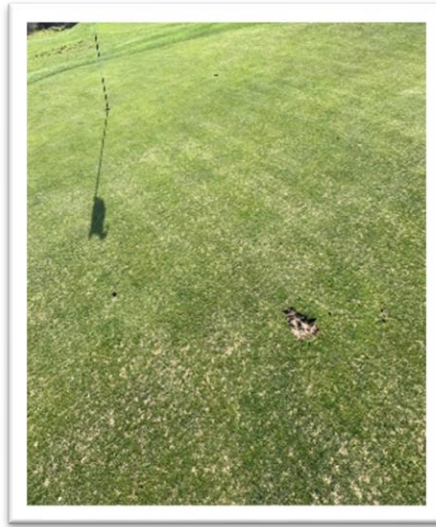
I have included an article I recently came across on social media by Ashford Golf Club.

There has been an exponential increase in the problems caused by worm casts and leatherjacket larvae since the European Union issued a ban on the use of the controlling chemicals.

As a result, fairways and tees are being turned into muddy areas with barely perceptible growth of new grass or even no grass at all. Emergency permission has to be sought for the use of an alternative treatment, but the permitted areas of application are strictly limited, the window of application is imprecise, and the degree of success is highly uncertain. Recovery from this annual assault requires clubs to finance not only the emergency treatment but an extensive and yearly treatment with seed and top dressing where such treatments were not previously required. All these treatments come at a substantial cost which can be beyond the average club, especially in these difficult times.

We, Ashford (Kent) Golf Club, are a successful member's owned club. Whilst we do not have the prestige and substantial resources of the more famous clubs, we are typical of the majority of UK golf clubs which, as a body, provide the overwhelming share of the golf played in this country. Failing course standards have an adverse impact on participation levels and the resultant viability of mainstream clubs which are at the heart of the game of golf.

What are our governing bodies doing to address this problem?



Bird damaged areas being plugged and repaired



Leather Jackets 11th Green



Chaffer Grubs 10th Green



Crow Damage 10th Green and Collar



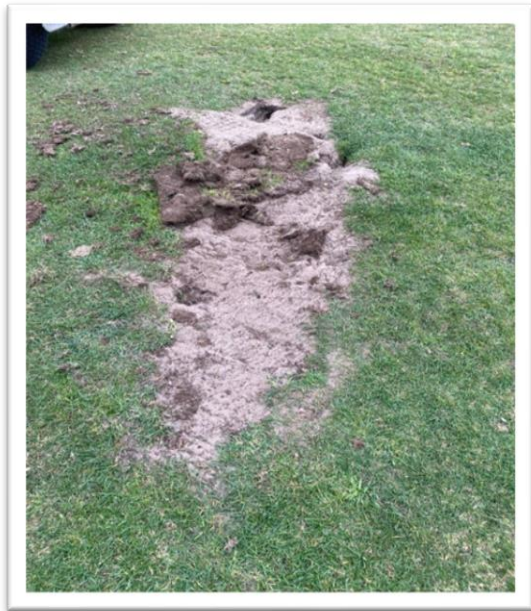
Repair Work 10th Green and Collar

Rabbits

This week all Greenkeepers at some point were out working on repairing and patching rabbit holes in some very tough weather conditions. We still have a few to complete on the 15th hole next week with that being three pallets of turf used on fairways and approaches to try and improve the worst affected areas. I feel we might be fighting a losing battle and I'm hopeful within the coming months a solution can be found.

Myself and the G.C.M Board are looking to work with the relevant authorities on seeking permissions on ways to dramatically reduce the rabbit population (This is proving to be somewhat difficult). These pests are causing significant damage to our playing surfaces affecting the Greenkeepers abilities to produce high quality playing surfaces, with the added visual aspects severely decreasing the overall course aesthetics and playing experience.

To improve the course going forward these pests must be controlled as any works G.C.M and the Greenkeepers undertake seems to be ruined over time by rabbit damage in some shape or form. After the Irrigation project is completed I would advise that rabbit control is prioritized before any other major works are carried out.



Fairway Rabbit Damage Repairs

Hole 6 Fairway Bunkering

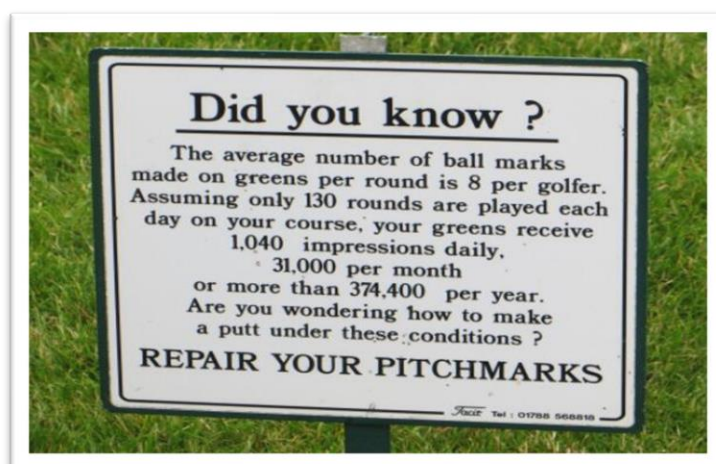
The bunkers on the 6th hole were due to be reshaped and refurbished this winter, due to lockdown and working restriction laws coming out of lockdown it was decided that these works would be rescheduled to November 2021. Our aim next week is to have the three fairway bunkers edged and shaped so that they are playable for the upcoming season. I am hoping the sand ordered from the U.K. arrives on time and we are able to reinstate these hazards for the early part of the competition calendar. We have completed one bunker so far that is now awaiting sand.



6th Bunker Before & After

Pitch Marks

Since the re-opening of the golf course there has been an increase in unrepaired ball marks. Could I kindly remind all members to take a moment whilst at a green to repair a pitch mark or two whilst they wait to putt. The early season low growing conditions makes recovery near nonexistent and we could do with all the help we can get in getting the putting surfaces up to a good standard.



Over the next few weeks we will be looking to start work on some of our other playing surfaces mainly Tees and Approaches. We will be applying a high Iron fertilizer when conditions are right, which will make way for scarification to take place this will help eradicate the moss that is accumulating on a number of these surfaces.

Greens will receive a verti-cut and another light application of sand topdressing to aid surface smoothness. All going well and the weather on our side we should be in a better place come April. Once we see signs the turf is starting to actively grow we will be lowering our greens mowing heights from 5.5mm to 4mm.

Many of you may have noticed many daisy's starting to pop up around the course, this is a positive sign as shows soil temperatures are moving in the right direction. We will be treating these weeds within the first two weeks of April. We must make sure all daisy's are actively growing to ensure a successful application of a selective herbicide. Going too early could mean we may see many return in the months after that would cost a substantial amount to treat again.

I hope this has given you all a brief insight in to what G.C.M and the Greenkeepers have been up to these past 3 weeks. My aim is to update all the memberships monthly on our progress as we go through the playing season.

If any member would like to discuss any issues they may have please feel free to email me at : info@gcm.gg

Lastly I would like to wish everyone a very happy and successful golfing season, it has not been easy these past couple of months and I am hoping to see everyone out enjoying their golf unrestricted soon.

Kind Regards

Ollie