

Course report May 2022

The course is transitioning into its summer presentation. Work continues to get to a definitive stage.

This report will cover the following subjects

- Greens
- Course presentation
- Machinery
- Irrigation
- Water Recycling System
- Staff development

Greens

We have been slow to get going, as always here at RCGC. The Poa grass still sits down and refuses to move. Leather Jackets may be affecting the growth potential of the Poa. There are symptoms which suggest the grass roots are under attack, a mottled appearance, birds pecking etc. We did sheet the 7th green and to our astonishment, only a 4 or 5 Leather Jackets appeared. We had a dig ourselves and did not find any.

Our strategies to avoid Leather Jacket infestations on the greens include -

- Sealing the surfaces after maintenance in August (zero aeration, the thought being that the holes provide a perfect egg laying opportunity for the crane fly and a perfect environment for the grub)
- Applications of Molasses - We used the same amount in 3 months this year as we did in all of 2021.
- Applications of Garlic - We applied for the nematode attack, but there is indication of this product affecting small Leather Jackets.
- Sheeting areas in 2021

There had been an emergency approval for a Chemical based product called Acelepryn. For the first time in at least 5 years, we chose not to use it. This was out of frustration - it costs a huge amount of money, and we were clearly seeing little result.

Adding a note of caution, we will not assume we have found a miracle cure. There may have been a reason behind the Leather Jackets not coming to the surface when we sheeted. Maybe the lack of holes to move up and down. Work in progress.

Providing a consistent surface

We have not been brushing, spiking, or verti-cutting the greens this year. The hope is not to disrupt the surface for putting and protect the Bent grass. The Bent grass grows in low temperatures, is disease and drought tolerant, but these aggressive procedures discourage the Bent. Unfortunately, we are experiencing some coarse growth which we will monitor and deal with if we feel it starts affecting quality; it is a balance between providing a continuous putting green surface and a surface which may get away from us.

Course Presentation

Fairways



I have always wanted to give the fairways some more character. Howard Swan of Swan design architects had given me the confidence to experiment. He gave me drawings and aerial photos of other clubs. This spring, I decided to give it a try. To get the shapes right is no easy task. It is like drawing up close on an uneven piece of paper, which can only be judged by laying the page down and stepping back 100 yards. There are some pointers to follow but really you do not know what it will look like until it is done, trial and error. I do hope they provide a refreshing aesthetic.



Keeping up with growth!

From March until now, the growth in the fairways and surrounds has been incredible. We have had to continuously cut despite the mess it causes. The damp mornings create a situation where the grass clippings gather on the machines and then sporadically drop in clumps.



A cutting unit caked in grass clippings which inevitably fall off creating more work to clear.



We needed to get out and spray the Growth Regulator (PGR) to slow things down. PGR can reduce the amount the grass elongates at a cellular level, therefore reducing the amount of mess, (It has many more benefits!).

To spray we needed a break from the continuous cutting. The level of PGR (we use) correlates to the height of grass. We needed the fairways to be at the desired height to spray, and we needed a spare body to operate the sprayer. It was an impossible situation for weeks.

We did get a window of opportunity on the 16th of May; the weather was good, and the fairways were not desperate for a cut. We excitedly jumped on the sprayer but no, the engine would not start! It was a once in a 10-year problem, a 'Stop Solenoid' had failed on the Workman diesel pump, unbelievable luck! It had to be taken away to be fixed.

Move forward to Wednesday Friday the 27th of May, with two applications of PGR and the fairways are finally under control.



Tees

Marking out and utilising as much of the area as we can.

Firstly, measure a suitable rectangle, making sure it points to the fairway or green. Confirm the angles are at 90°.

Mark with paint, and then hand mow the new shapes.



We do this at the beginning of each season. As much as we try, the lines move throughout the season.

This year we have tried to make the tees bigger where we can. For example, the 9th tee has increased, and you can see the grass is stressed from being cut from 32 mm to 10 mm. This will recover over time.



Tee divots



We fill the divots every week with top dressing and seed. The grass seed we currently use has an amazing ability to germinate and establish, even at low temperatures. To enhance this, we are going to trial a creeping Rye grass.

Long Eco-Rough

In the Autumn of 2021, we used a graminicide for the first time to help in our attempts to thin the rough areas. The results are positive.

The main area we concentrated on was in between the 7th and 8th fairway. We raked and scarified this multiple times; the area was split into two sections. The one towards the 7th tee and 8th green received the graminicide application, the area towards the 7th green and 8th tee did not. There is a marked difference.



Left: The grass is still thick at the base of trees where we could not manoeuvre the machines.

Right: Ball finding has improved, and with more work I believe we will achieve the desired result.

Below: The Yellow Rattle has germinated, hopefully this helps prevent coarse grass returning.

Machinery

We are in the middle of a terrible run of luck. Breakdown after breakdown.

Not helped by the delay in delivery of new machinery. Trying to keep the old fairway mowers going in the recent high growth has been challenging.

We have had 2 workman utility vehicles breakdown (one mentioned above with the stop solenoid, the other one had a gearing issue). The little rough mower had a spring snap which delivers drive to the hydraulic system. The list goes on...



We are fortunate enough to have the services of [D J Scott Garden Machinery](#). Their level of service is impeccable, knowing how much work they have on, how many golf clubs they look after and, like us, the trouble they have with recruiting staff. A big thank you to them for keeping us up and running.

Irrigation

Apologies for the half-completed repairs. The irrigation company allocate us a day amongst all the other clubs which are desperate for repairs. When the technician arrived to fix the leaks etc, we had an unexpected electrical problem whereby the whole system was taken down. The priority was to get the system back working. The original list we had for the technician was not completed and we must wait our turn again for another visit.
(13th June)

Water Recycling System

By law, we are required to wash our machinery on a suitable washdown pad. The contaminated water runs into a 5000ltr underground tank. This tank has various chambers where the water is filtered and aerated. With added microbes to break down the hydrocarbons, the water can be safely recycled for us to use again to wash our machines.

Every year we have the system serviced.



Out with the old and in with the new. The contrast between a year-old filter and a fresh one.



Over time the silt and sludge can build up at the bottom of the tank. This will require us to vacuum out all the contents and refill with clean water. I am currently asking local companies to quote us for this work.

Staff Development

Graeme Barnsley nears the end of his level 2 diploma. His end point assessment date is being processed.

Brandon Bell enjoyed a day of training provided by Reesink, the company who supply our Toro equipment. We hope this underpinning knowledge helps towards his confidence in using the machines. The day comprised of these topics -

Cutting units components (Reels)

Toro's DPA system

Correct Bedknife

Bedknife Attitude

Turf Compensation spring

Counterbalance

Setting the QOC (Quality of Cut)

Bench HOC v's Effective HOC



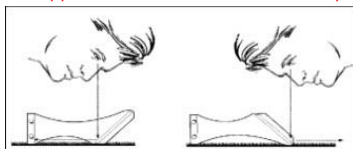
Bench vs. Effective HOC

HOC – height of cut (bench setting)

Effective HOC - the actual HOC in the turf (measured with a turf evaluator)

What could change your effective HOC?

- Aggressiveness of Cut (BCD setting)
- Bedknives (profile design, HOC range)
- Rollers – smooth vs. WiehleProfile, diameter, length...
- CU Weight– 11" vs. 14" blade CU's
- Attachment(groomer, rear roller brushes, clippings in base)
- Incorrect tyre pressures
- Counterbalance
- Applies to Greens as well as Fairways



Cutting Unit Components

An example of the slides used during the training day.

Dual Point Adjustment (DPA)

Common adjustment for all Toro DPA Cutting units

Adjusts each side of the bedknife up towards the reel

Fine tune adjustment

- 127mm (5in) Dia reels: 0.018mm (0.0007in)
- 178mm (7in) Dia reels: 0.023mm (0.0009in)

Stiffness

- Bedknife will deflect prior to adjuster shifting
- Wave washers remove axial end -play

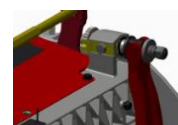
Design allows for simple removal of bedbar/bedknife asm

Adjusting bedknife to reel superior design

- HOC determined by reel diameter
- Adjust bedknife to reel has less HOC change



Fairway



Greensmower

Brandon and Paul Glue joined me for a cold and wet turf club at the Isle of Purbeck. The day was organised by BIGGA and delivered by Course Advisor, David Langheim MG. A fascinating insight into the golf club and how it has come through some very dark times and now has a bright future ahead of itself. All the time working in a site of scientific special interest, restricting the number of fertilisers, chemicals, even types of grass seed used.



It is good to see the loyalty of the staff has now been rewarded with some much-needed investment. There is a new fleet of machinery and plans to upgrade their working quarters. The team can now get ahead and remove all the trees and gorse which has plagued the site over recent years with the full backing and financial help from the government.



Ongoing Work at RCGC

Presentation work to continue

Preparations for the Pro Am and Club Championships

Machinery Trials and Demonstrations to fulfil the replacement programme

Irrigation System Repairs

Staff Training