

GREENS COMMITTEE

June 2019 – Report for Club Members

CAN WE HAVE SOME MORE RAIN PLEASE?

It's been another odd year so far weather wise. The biggest problem we have faced is probably with our greens. As per most courses, we have more than one grass type on our greens. One of them in particular likes the weather to be a bit warmer than we have during April and much of May to get it growing. This means we have a period where some greens grass is growing and some is not. This does not help the look or flatness of the greens. The temperatures have picked up finally and we are starting to see the benefit of that with the greens starting to improve. Our greens themselves are not adversely impacted by lack of rain as we fortunately have a watering system. But it of course impacts the fairways and rough. The bottom line is we need more of it (rain), a lot more than we have been having in the last six weeks or so to maintain ongoing growth.

GREENS, GREENS, GREENS

Let's be honest, if you go to a course and the greens are great, you can forgive a lot of other things. We have been struggling with getting ours out of winter fashion, predominantly due to the nights still being too cold. Since we have been on the committee the greens have been a hot topic of conversation. How do we get them more consistent for a longer period of time? Well it's a difficult one. We have small greens and do not use temporary greens in winter unless it's absolutely necessary. This inevitably causes a certain amount of wear and damage. On top of this we have had issues with disease and moss (not uncommon). This is being dealt with, but again takes time to see the results. One thing we have done is request a visit from STRI (in short soil and grass experts) to review the greens and see if the actions we are taking are appropriate, or if there are other things we can be doing. We are all looking forward to their visit in June and subsequent report. This has not been done for several years, but we felt it important to get their unbiased opinion of where we are at, and what else we can be doing.

I'D NEVER HEARD OF LEATHERJACKETS

Well I know what they are now. We have all seen the damage they can cause on the greens. It's the holes our lovely bird friends have been digging on our greens to try and get the blighters out of the ground. It has caused the obvious damage you will have all seen. The reason we have this issue this year is due to the chemical used on the greens to stop this happening was banned from use. The end result is there for all to see. A number of golf courses, bowling greens etc. have had the same problem. The good news is those that banned it have done something of a U turn. We should be able to apply for a licence to be able to obtain and use the chemical for next year. All being good this should resolve the problem next year.

HOME AND AWAY

I've played a few courses this year along with many of you no doubt, and I have witnessed good and not so good. I've had plenty of reports from other members, often to tell me how good such and such a place is (been there myself), and sometimes the other way around. There are so many factors involved in course condition, which we are learning more and more about since being on this committee. The ground we have underneath is a massive one (e.g. clay, chalk, gravel etc.), and not one that can realistically be changed. Another of course being the weather, and incredibly significantly that horrible word 'money'. If you have money to throw at things you can clearly have a bigger short-term impact. So, for example telling me such and such a course is amazing, is not really going to float my boat anymore if I am aware that they can throw money at problems, or have fairway watering, or American spec greens etc. We are a niche course (acreage vs foot traffic in particular), not easy to compare like for like locally, so I will try not to do that anymore. These days I'm more interested in our course and what we can do to that, rather than someone else's track.

SO WHATS BEEN GOING ON?

Following the end of the winter program the main focus of course is on cutting grass. It pretty much takes 100% of the Green keeper's time for April / May and I imagine June. It all depends on the weather conditions. The less rain we get the less the grass will grow which provides opportunity for other things to be done. Should we get into this situation, the focus will not be on creating miracles (don't know anyone that can grow grass without water), it will be on making the bits we can impact as good as they can be. We are trying to make sure that the greens are cut and rolled at least once at the weekends (and where we have significant events on, both days). This may sound like it should be a given, but these days when you need two members of staff on site to use machinery (as per legal requirements), it is not always possible. But the key is we are talking about it and asking for it.

WHAT I'VE BEEN TOLD

Someone told me the other day that they had not seen any consistent improvement in our course since the greens committee has been in place. Everyone of course is welcome to their opinion, and to be honest we are never going to satisfy everyone. Fortunately, I have received feedback from a number of members and visitors that suggests otherwise. My view is had the greens committee not been in place, we would not have a new 7th tee, we would not have re-seeded 5th, 6th, 14th and 15th fairways (and a number of other areas). We would not have re-introduced the seed buckets that you have kindly been using on the fairways. We would not have improved the look of the shrubs next to the clubhouse, and we would not have grass seed in the tee buckets, or be hand cutting the first and 9th tees. We would probably not be spraying the weeds on the course (ongoing project), and we would probably not be clearing out the debris under the trees (another ongoing project on hold whilst we have to cut grass constantly). Whilst we have not achieved all that I would have wanted in that time (getting the bunkers consistent being an obvious example), things are being done. We will always welcome your feedback, both positive and 'constructive'.

WHAT CAN WE ALL BE DOING?

Thank you to everyone for using the divot pots on the course. It is making a clear difference. Our fairways have been some of the best I have played on this year (I'm praying for rain so that can continue). We are noticing a lot of pitch marks on the greens recently (particularly in the evening when the light shows them up clearly). Please do not think if you don't hit the ball in from the clouds you will not make a mark (even a light mark). Easy rule. Repair two marks on every green and we won't have a problem. Final one, seed is being placed in the tee buckets on the par 3's. But it is evident that not everyone is making best use of it. Please make the effort to fill a couple of divots on tees each time you play a par 3. The 11th tee in particular could benefit from members spending a few moments filling in some additional divots.