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TYNEMOUTH GOLF CLUB

Advisory Report on the Golf Course

Report Date: Thursday 8th May 2019
Consultant: Dr Ian McClements

Tynemouth Golf Club

Date of Visit:	Thursday 2nd May 2019
Visit Objective:	To review course conditioning at the conclusion of the winter period and to outline maintenance objectives for the main competition season.
Present:	Mr David Steven – Greens Chairman, Mr Brian Udberg- Member of Green Committee, Mr Ian Kerr – Head Greenkeeper, Dr Ian McClements – Senior Agronomist
Weather:	Scattered showers, wind north to north-easterly 12 mph, 7-12°C

Headlines

- Putting surfaces have overwintered well following a relatively benign winter. Grass growth rates had yet to completely stabilise with some meadow-grass patches on greens lagging behind stronger populations of bent.
- Actual heights of cut when measured with a prism were much closer to 5 mm (9th green) compared with a reported bench setting of 4 mm. At the current setting, bentgrass colonies were a little leafy in places.
- Accumulations of organic matter prevalent at the sward base should be dealt with via a spring verticutting. Thereafter, the main thrust of the green's maintenance programme is on delivering sufficient quantities of sand over the growing season to achieve a much more uniform and even dilution of organic matter.
- One of our maintenance objectives for 2019 is to develop the pace of the putting surfaces for members and visitors alike.
- Green profiles were dry but tees mores so, particularly the 7th and 8th which had yet to fully recover from the previously dry summer season. Overall, it was surprising how dry the soil profiles were for the end of winter/early spring.
- Strategies were discussed for the recovery of the 7th and 8th tees and we discussed the importance in opening the profiles to encourage moisture penetration from whatever rainfall may occur.
- Pipe drainage had been installed into the 5th and 13th greens with surface levels along the top of the drain lines yet to be perfected.

Key Actions

- Putting surface development should focus on removing some of the organic matter followed by top dressing and then a reduction in mowing heights.
- Additional top dressings are required to the recently installed drainage lines on the 5th and 13th greens.
- Regular dustings of sand top dressing are important in achieving the desired reduction in surface organic matter levels.
- Keep up the aeration programme to encourage microbial activity and natural thatch decomposition.
- The 7th and 8th tees require additional inputs to encourage sward recovery.
- All tees require aeration to open up the surfaces to encourage moisture penetration.

Figure 1: On some surfaces, the annual meadow grass component had yet to return to full growth

Figure 2: The putting surfaces are botanically strong but the bentgrass component was leafy in places

Figure 3: Leafier bent that would benefit from being brushed to elevate the leaves ahead of mowing

Figure 4: Surface levels along the tops of the drainage lines on the 13th green had yet to be perfected

Figure 5: Typical green profile showing more organic matter in the upper profile that is desired. Regular sand dressings and aeration are important in achieving a more uniform dilution of organic matter as it arises and in encouraging natural decomposition of what is already present

Figure 6: This hollow on the putting green is prone to collecting surface water. Either the functionality of the vertical sump should be reviewed or the surface recontoured to shed water away from the green.

Figure 7: The ground to the rear of the 7th green complex should be reinstated following stump removal and a more uniform sward developed for pitching from

Figure 8: Drainage line on the 14th carry will be prone to weakening in dry weather

Figure 9: The first tee is the visitors first impression of the course

Figure 10: The 7th tee had yet to recover from last summer's drought

Figure 11: The profile of the 7th tee was remarkably dry and hydrophobic

Recommendations

Greens

- In preparation for the summer season the small quantity of organic debris at the sward base should be teased out with a spring verticutting/scarification.
- The initial scarification will provide an opportunity to apply sand that can be worked into the scarification lines and sward base to dilute organic debris that has accumulated over the winter months.
- Regular sanding is crucial to the successful dilution of organic debris that arises over the summer months and the aspiration is to ensure that we apply sufficient quantities of sand on a regular enough basis to achieve this result. Light dustings are the most effective as they cause the least inconvenience to play but they do need to be applied regularly. The expectation is that you should look into the base of the sward and be able to see a small quantity of sand around the crown of the plant, once this disappears then the sanding process should be repeated. Regular sanding helps to maintain the crown in a more upright position helping to develop and improve sward texture. With regular sanding, the need for verticutting is greatly diminished.
- The bench setting of the mower was reportedly 4 mm whilst the actual height of cut measured on the 9th green with a prism at the time of the visit indicated that the grass was much closer to 5 mm. This suggested there is the potential to reduce the height of cut by at least 1 mm during the height of the growing season to achieve an actual height of cut of around 4 mm.
- This reduction in mowing height coupled with regular sanding should help to develop smoothness, trueness and the pace of the surfaces. If extra pace is needed, then roll the greens on one if not two occasions each week in advance of the main golf competition days.
- The principles behind the nutritional programme to greens is to apply granular fertiliser in the spring to initiate growth to allow the surfaces to be set up for the main playing season. Thereafter keep the inputs quiet to support recovery from wear and tear without over stimulating growth, normally achieved with liquids.
- The monthly aeration programme should continue but in the case of the 8th green plan to achieve a little more heave with the verti-drain to try and fracture and open up this profile which was considered to be tighter than others at depth. There may also be an opportunity to repeat this during a quieter period in the golfing calendar. If there is some surface disruption then use the turf iron to restore surface levels.
- Apply a little extra nutrient to the 5th and 13th greens to facilitate extra top dressings which are needed along the recently installed drainage lines where levels have yet to be perfected. Apply top dressing by hand and lute into the base of the sward to accelerate level improvement. Try and apply as much sand as possible without smothering the surface.

Green Surrounds & Approaches

- Where trees have been removed at the rear of the 7th green complex it would be desirable to develop an area of fringing rough to improve the consistency of lies. This will necessitate the plugging of the ground previously occupied by the tree stumps with turf and the seeding up of surrounding areas with divot mixture. Apply a dressing of fertiliser to encourage growth and recovery.
- Ensure that the top dressings applied to greens are extended to include the immediate collars and a little further out into the approach to help develop firmness and surface uniformity and consistency for putting or chipping.

Tees

- Tee surfaces were generally well presented and support a decent grass cover apart from the 7th and 8th which had yet to fully recover from last summer's drought.
- Whilst tees are dominated by desirable species the profiles were all remarkably dry and in a condition that would be more typical of the end of summer. To ensure that the tee profiles capitalise on any rainfall that should occur, the surfaces should be solid tine spiked to a depth of around 50 mm to open up the surfaces to aid water penetration.
- The 7th and 8th tees should be incorporated into the greens wetting agent programme to help rewet the profiles, the application of wetting agent was a priority as the first application should normally be applied before the profiles start to dry, normally early to mid March.
- In the case of the 7th and 8th, use a small 10 mm blunted solid tine to create a seed bed with the depth of tine penetration restricted to around 10 mm. Seed would be worked into the tops of the tine holes before top dressing. There would be merit in using a top dressing containing sand/compost to help moisture retention and nutrient provision. Apply water to rewet the profiles and to keep the seedbed damp to favour germination/establishment of the seed.

Greens Drainage

- The recent installation of drainage to the 5th and 13th greens has yet to be fully tested but it is hoped that this will provide the impetus to complete drainage installation to the 8th and also to the localised hollows on the putting green.
- Where drainage is to be introduced into the putting green this may have to be directed to a suitably sized and positioned sump as we understand that the Local Authority is reluctant to give permission to discharge to the local storm water drainage.

Fairways

- Drains had been installed across the carry at the 14th fairway and across the approach to the 13th where some washout had occurred.
- Washouts should be topped up with the same sand/soil mix and seed. Topping of the tops of the drains with the sand/soil mixture is preferred over turf as it will maximise water interception but these will be prone to drying out in the summer months and are likely to require further overseeding towards the end of the summer period.

Signed

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