

Course News



Greens Week

The greens maintenance week at any golf club is always met with grumbles from golfers. As we attempt to keep Members informed please find a few frequently asked questions below, which have been answered by our Course Manager Steve Robinson.

What type of work will be undertaken in this year's maintenance week?

In an ideal world we would like to hollow tine the greens with half inch tines, removing the cores, over-seed the greens with bent grass seed and top-dress with sand. However with the current drought conditions and no sign of change this month we have to be very careful not to open up the greens, exposing them to the heat and dryness which will put them under undue stress. Our contingency is to reduce the tine size to 10mm and remove a smaller core if necessary, with no rain in prospect. Finally, if this is still deemed to be too aggressive we will verti drain (A solid 8mm tine which goes approximately 8 inches down into the ground) and solid tine (a 10mm tine that goes down to around 3 inches).

If we are unable to tine and remove a core an alternative date will be sought in October, once all major competitions have been completed.

Is this work really necessary?

Unfortunately aeration work to the greens is critical, mainly to tackle the build-up of thatch below the surface (this is organic matter that builds up at the base of the turf). If the thatch layer becomes excessive then it begins to have a negative impact on the health of the turf as well as the greens playability. We can discourage the build-up of thatch

with stringent irrigation and nutrient input, but even rainfall plays a significant part, and if you consider last year we had double the average annual rainfall, we have to address the consequences of that. If we can keep on top of our thatch levels the condition of the greens will continue to improve and our all year round playability will not suffer. This also prevents the need to use temporary greens in the winter, unlike many other clubs in the area.

Why complete the work in the peak of the season?

The best part of the growing season coincides with the golf season and it is felt that this period in the diary gives the best recovery times for this work. We appreciate the recovery time was quite considerable in recent years as we were being so aggressive with the scarification of the greens, which is another method used to remove thatch. Because of the work carried out in recent years we are now in a stronger position in controlling the thatch and subsequently the need to be quite so aggressive has reduced. However, if we use this optimum time to remove thatch via hollow tining, it allows us to take the cores out cleanly and top dress as the conditions are predominantly dry. If we were to leave it until October the weather would often dictate the level of work completed and/or cancel it altogether.

Rough, Rough, Rough (Not as bad as Muirfield!)

The ecological rough on the peripherals of many holes at Moortown GC is always a constant topic of conversation between members, with most agreeing the aesthetics are excellent but the severity can be too harsh in many places.

The Club is very keen to maintain the long rough as much as possible, not only to keep the desired look, but also to hold onto the challenge of a championship golf course. There is the environmental side of the argument too with so many diverse wild flowers, insects and wildlife in abundance.

Most of the areas in question are a long way from the landing areas of the fairways and we have a very generous buffer zone of semi rough before you reach it. However, we appreciate that once you find the ecological rough it can be very difficult to find and play your ball which is frustrating for the golfer and holds up play. Unfortunately much of the problem is self-inflicted with wall to wall mowing taking place at many times over the last 30 years or so. This constant mowing every week allowing the grass cuttings to return to the soil has enriched areas considerably. This build-up of nutrient has now changed the species of grass with undesirable Rye grass and Yorkshire fog being in abundance. When we allow the grass to grow in these areas it can be too coarse and thick.

Over the last 2-3 years we have invested in a wiedenmann mower and collection system which allows us to mow the grass and remove all of the clippings at the same time. This will hopefully start to reverse the trend over the next few years.



On top of this, we are using a specialist herbicide that takes out the coarser rye and Yorkshire fog whilst leaving the more desirable fescue and bent grass unharmed. This is quite an expensive chemical particularly if you consider the sheer size of areas we are considering and the fact you need to do it twice a year. The budget has not allowed us to be extensive with this process so far but once we are accepted onto the higher level stewardship we will be able to commit more to it.

We have begun to target a few areas with the Wiedenmann mower this week in areas that are considered hotspots for the average golfer; these include the area between 2nd /16th holes, right of the 5th, between 6th/7th and the right of the 15th. Once these areas are complete we intend to spray the herbicide.



There are several fairway bunkers which fit into the same mould regarding the rough, similar to that on the 5th fairway (above). Our aim is to emulate the fairway bunkers on the 18th (below) which are left to develop naturally, leaving a 'whispy' grass feature, preventing the need to over manicure. If we can allow the more enriched bunkers to put their efforts into producing a seed head and then cut and remove it, over time it will begin to thin out and have the desired look and playability.



Bunker Playability

We are still receiving varied levels of feedback over the performance of the bunker sand. The all-round properties of the sand that was chosen ensure that the bunkers drain well during even the severest of weather. However we appreciate the dry conditions that we are presently experiencing lead to an increased number of plugged balls more notably in the faces, this is a trait of all types of sands when extreme dry periods ensue. Noticing this the green staff are constantly trying to drag sand off the faces and are spending a large number of man hours as they try to prevent this occurrence.

We have purchased new rakes this summer with the intention of using the smooth side as much as possible to minimise the disruption to the sand. Notices have been positioned around the clubhouse requesting that player's assistance with this.



Jim Tennant – May 2013
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