

JANUARY 4th - COURSE COMMITTEE UPDATE FOR MEMBERS



Each month, your Course Committee will endeavour to provide an update of course activities. This information will be shared on Monthly Medal Saturdays (when Course Committee meeting dates align) and the following Wednesday and Thursday competition days.

Your Course Committee is Course Superintendent Dylan Knight, Rod Connelly, Jan Walklate, Ian Kerr, Fred Kath, Steve Jeffrey and Lex Johnstone. As your representatives, queries, suggestions and ideas can be fed to the Committee via these people.

GREENS

As members will be aware, we have had some significant issues with our greens over recent weeks.

For the past few months, Dylan has flagged with the Course Committee and General Committee the poor profile of the sub surface soils in our greens. We had existing issues with black layer and thatch build up. Hence the decision was made to core deeply, with wide tynes and some areas were aerated 2/3 times in our recent coring. A decision was also made to core twice this season to try to address this issue asap.

Many factors have contributed to the current dry patches on our greens.

It appears our main issue has been with stem weevils that have attacked the greens. As dry patches have appeared over recent weeks, we have treated them as tree root invasion issues and 'dry patch' issues caused by our poor soil health under the greens. Extra hand watering has been completed to address dry areas and wetting agents added to encourage moisture penetration. We had sprayed a preventative for stem weevils but it appears we may have underestimated the level of infestation. Weevil infestation through winter shows up in summer.

Weevil infestation would explain why some areas of greens are healthy while right next door there are issues, even though both areas of the green are getting the same amount of water. In areas caused by dry patch, there will be some re-growth. In areas affected by stem weevil, the area will be completely dead.

A stem weevil treatment has been applied this week and a full 12 month preventative program will now be put in place.

Other contributing factors to the condition of the greens include:-

- When the greens were cored (Monday Dec 2nd /Tuesday Dec 3rd), we had a significant irrigation blowout on the Tuesday afternoon, which created two problems

1. The whole course was not watered for 48 hours. Even though it was only 26C, it had an impact on the greens, and possibly put some areas into stress that has continued. (healthy greens with healthy soil should be able to handle two days at 26C without water without significant issues)
2. Staff had to stop the sanding of the greens and attend to the irrigation issues. It meant that the greens were not sanded and fully washed in by the Tuesday night as per planned. This happened by the Thursday night. Dylan estimated at the time that this delayed full grass recovery by about a week.

- We have had significant issues with fairy ring. There are three different types of fairy rings, and we have them all. While we have fairy ring in all our greens, the 1st, 5th, 10th and 16th have been particularly affected. You don't know you have it until it pops up.

Fairy rings are caused by a diverse family of soil-inhabiting fungi called basidiomycetes. They typically appear as dark green circles in the lawn ranging in size from a few inches to 200 feet or more in diameter. Lush rings of turf are formed by the release of nutrients, in particular nitrogen, from the activity of the fungus living on organic matter in the soil. A circle of mushrooms usually develops around the edge of the infected area. Fairy rings grow outward at the rate of 6 to 24 inches annually depending on grass, soil and weather conditions. They are most common on sandy soils that are low in water and fertility. Thick thatch layers also contribute to this problem. Besides being unsightly, fairy rings can cause serious damage to lawns. Often the disease will produce a thick fungal mat that prevents water from reaching the grass roots below. Once the soil becomes dry it is very difficult to wet and the grass roots eventually die. The fungus may also deplete soil nutrients and, in some cases, will release a toxic by-product that can directly kill the turf within a ring.

A treatment for fairy ring has been applied to all greens this week. We should see a gradual improvement in the surface of these areas. Some bare areas affected by fairy ring will be plugged out prior to the pro-am.

- When coring, the coring machine struck tree roots on the practice putting green and greens 2, 3, 6, 10, 14, 15 & 18. These roots are within 100mm of the surface (in some cases 20mm) and take significant moisture from the green. Some of these greens are currently under significant stress.
- There have been some inconsistencies in computer driven irrigation runs. The same program can be set for two nights in a row, but runs differently. Dylan will seek assistance from the suppliers.

Other

- A second coring will take place after the Pro-Am and the Australia Day long weekend, leaving four weeks for the greens to recover for the Volkswagen Scramble.
- Greens will likely be cored twice a year for the next three years to improve our soil profile.
- Members are reminded that pitch marks need to be repaired. Thanks for your support. Fix yours +1 other.

FAIRWAYS

- With the removal of all of the Winter grasses, we are getting a clearer picture of the amount of common couch, santa ana couch and kikuyu (warm season grasses) on our fairways. Fertilising has continued on a fortnightly basis. Common couch and santa ana couch percentages were about as expected but there is more kikuyu in our fairways than anticipated.
- With the removal of the winter grasses last Spring, there is still some patchiness to our fairways. With three/four months of growing season ahead of us, and with constant fertilising, we are aiming at a more consistent cover of grass by the Autumn.
- Prime conditions for the growth of the couch is when the soil temperature is at 16C/17C +. Our soil temperature has increased and stabilised to an optimal level, so now it is a case of keeping the water up to it and removing unwanted grasses as they appear.
- Our fairways are currently being cut at 12mm, a little shorter than our preferred height of 14-16mm.
- We are experiencing some trouble with couch mite in our fairways. By keeping the couch leaf shorter, we are aiming to give them less to nibble on. This, along with a regular spraying plan set at intervals to break their hatching cycle, will hopefully reduce the damage or remove the issue altogether. Couch mite is a microscopic but that feasts on new leaf and stops the couch from flourishing in its growth season. We have applied two sprays for couch mite and will apply a third application in the next few days. If we have successfully reduced or removed the couch mite issues, we should see improved growth in 5/6 weeks. Fairways will return to preferred height as soon as possible.
- We are aiming to have very healthy fairways heading into winter dormancy as this means they will come out of dormancy much healthier.
- Removal of the Parramatta Grass (clumpy & spiky grass) on the 13th fairway has begun with some spot spraying which appears to have been successful. We have had a good result to date and will continue to remove this grass from the fairway areas first before starting eradication from the rough.
- Members are reminded to be vigilant in carrying and using sand buckets. Fill your divots, +1 other.

IRRIGATION

- During green coring, the main irrigation line that goes under the road between 10th & 11th blew out late Tuesday afternoon, meaning we were without water for the Tuesday/Wednesday night while parts were sourced. We required 150mm pressure pipe which is not readily stocked in Bendigo. Thanks to Neangar Park GC, we were able to get what was required.
- This blow out had a two-fold impact – 1. We were unable to water for two nights and 2. Staff priority was on fixing the irrigation so the full sanding of the greens after coring was held up by a day.
- All greens have suffered a little from not being watered for two days initially after coring, but have recovered well from the coring since.
- The fact that they suffered so quickly from lack of water, highlights the delicate state of our soil profile under the greens, so it emphasises the need for significant coring and renovations to be completed over the next couple of years.

- We are experiencing a range of irrigation issues involving the pumps, computer programming and individual sprinkler heads. This has led to some inconsistency in watering, showing up as dry spots on fairways, or green trickle lines where heads are not shutting off completely. At times we have run the same program on a number of nights but had different results each time. Our pump suppliers are visiting asap to assist in diagnosing exact issues and working towards a solution.
- GUR patches on 8 and 17 have been remarked for competition days.
- Point of interest for members:- 20 minutes of irrigation puts out the equivalent of 5mls of rain. We are currently losing approx. 16mls a day of moisture in evaporation.

PRACTICE FAIRWAY

- The irrigation system on the practice fairway has been completed and tested, showing excellent flow. While we have used new pipe, we have been able to re-use irrigation heads that were in the shed from a previous job, saving some money.
- In the next four weeks, sprigs will be collected from other clubs and sprigged into our practice fairway nursery area. General Committee has chosen to plant four varieties of couch in our nursery – santa ana, winter green (same as Rich River), grand prix (same as Black Bull) and tif tuf. Each species will be planted into a separate bay and one bay will be planted with all four together. We are doing this to ascertain which variety best suits our conditions, which will provide the best coverage for members and which variety requires the least amount of water to flourish. It is envisaged that we will be able to re-surface two fairways a year. This of course will be dependent on our water allocation each year.
- In Spring, we will make a decision on which grass to move forward with. We anticipate the couch being ready for harvesting in Spring. We will repeat the scarifying and sprigging process on our own fairways with the aim of establishing a 100% couch cover. While specific details haven't been finalised, we will look at the likelihood of completing two fairways/year. There will be some interruption to normal golf during this time but Course Committee, General Committee and Match Committee will work together to plan this program to cause the least disruption possible
- During these works, the main part of the practice fairway will be out of action. We apologise for the inconvenience – a bit of short term pain for long term gain.

TEES

- All tees have been scarified to reduce thatch levels. Tees have been fertilised and are responding well.
- Once established, our couch nursery will be particularly useful in re-surfacing tees. Some shadier tees may need to be re-surfaced every 2/3 years. Full tee re-builds will probably not take place until our nursery is well established.
- The Course Committee is still prioritising tee works – in two categories - tees needing minor works and tees needing major works.
- A full audit of all our teeing grounds has been completed - tees were scored for flatness, % couch cover and % sun/shade. Tees with the lowest scores will be targeted for improvement works first. The square metrage of all teeing areas was also calculated

- When done, tees will be laser levelled and sprinkler heads removed from teeing areas where possible.

COURSE WORKS

Work is continuing to formalise a Vegetation Plan to guide course plantings for the next 5-10 years.

The Course Committee will be completing a number of course walks to look at planning ideas for all 18 holes as part of a developing a long term course plan. Holes 4-8 are next on the list.

BEST WISHES

Please contact Rod, Jan, Ian, Fred, Steve and Lex with any ideas or issues.

With thanks, Course Committee