

## **AUGUST - COURSE COMMITTEE UPDATE FOR MEMBERS**

First of all, my apologies for not providing a Course Report for Members over the last couple of months. While there has been plenty happening on course, time and ever changing circumstances have meant Course Reports to Members kept getting put on hold in light of possible changes and updates.



While the global and local circumstances we find ourselves in can be overwhelming, we are excited by the progress on course in many areas over the last few months and we are really looking forward to a number of initiatives that are in place to keep moving our course and club in an upwardly direction.

With competition golf being put on hold over the next few weeks, we will take the chance to bring forward some course works that would normally involve some interruption to important club events. These works will have minimal impact on play given golf is primarily a recreational and social activity for the next few weeks.

The amazing support members have given to club since competitions have resumed have meant finances have been ticking over and have provided Dylan and the Course Committee the opportunity to continue moving ahead with a range of short and long term projects. The Course Committee look forward to your continued involvement and patronage in this period of non-competition golf.

*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 Course Committee via these people.*

## **STAFF**

On behalf of the members, I would like to thank our staff for all of their work on course over the last few months. While the COVID restrictions have had a big impact on our finances, we have been lucky enough to be eligible for Jobkeeper.

Course Committee appreciates Glen, Chris and Dylan's flexibility in reducing hours in line with our Jobkeeper capacity.

## **VOLUNTEERS**

On behalf of members, the Course Committee would like to thank our group of volunteers who come out each Tuesday morning and on weekends to complete a range of tasks around the course.

Our on-course volunteers complete somewhere between 30-50 hours/week and their work allows staff to focus on course maintenance and projects. A massive contribution.

During Stage 3 restrictions, volunteer programs will not run.

## **MEMBERS**

In these times of significant increase in green fee players, members are asked to do a little extra in looking after our course by carrying and using sand buckets, fixing pitch marks or collecting rubbish that might be lying around the course. If every member fills in an extra divot per hole and fixes an extra pitch mark or two per green, that will go a long way to helping our course bounce into Spring and be ready to make the most of our upcoming growth seasons.

## **COURSE COMMITTEE**

Our Course Committee regularly completes course walks, focussing on 2/3 holes at a time with the aim of putting together a 5-10 year plan for each hole that focusses on continual course improvements to greens, tees, fairways, bunkering, pathways, trees, irrigation and beautification.

Our next walk is on Sunday August 23rd, focussing on holes 6-9. If you have any thoughts, please catch up with one of your Course Committee members.

## **FROSTS**

This season has seen up to 30 frosts on course and members will have noticed how dry the course is getting. Significant early season rains provided a great start, but with almost no rainfall in July, and lots of frosts, the soil profile is fairly dry for Winter. An inch of rain on the weekend just gone will help in the short term, but some irrigation may be carried out in the coming weeks to maintain moisture levels in soil.

## **ROOT PRUNING**

- Members playing over the last few days may have noticed Dylan has been busy on the root pruner, completing a 'lap' of each fairway and tee, and laps of each green as we seek to reduce the effect that surface roots are having on our turf.
- The pruner slices through roots down to a depth of 300mm, with two blades operating 300mm apart to cut the root in two spots, meaning a more effective re-growth barrier is created.
- There will be some immediate impact to the surfaces where roots are uncovered and dug out, but with recent rains and no competition golf, this is an ideal time to carry out these works.
- While there are no comps running, balls finishing on the 'slice marks' can be moved off.
- It is estimated that 10-20% of our irrigation on tees, fairways and greens is lost to tree roots.



## GREENS

- Work on recovering our green surfaces has continued over the Winter months. Extensive plugging to greens 1, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16 and 18 has taken place, with a full coverage expected by the end of Spring.
- During plugging, many tree roots have been uncovered within 20-30mm of the greens surface. (10<sup>th</sup> green pictured)
- Much of the Winter maintenance on the greens has been focussed on improving the soil profile and root health of our greens to avoid the drying out of greens surfaces over the next six months. All greens have been regularly dusted, deep tyned twice (150mm) and have had wetting agents applied as we look to improve the ability of the water to get down to the roots rather than running off the surfaces of the greens. Recent rains have shown that water is now moving through the soil profile and reaching our sub surface drainage pipes.
- We have had an early sprouting of fairy ring on a few greens which is very early in the season. Chemicals have been applied to reduce its impact. These areas will be monitored closely over the next few months.
- Sprinkler heads around greens have been raised and levelled to maximise greens irrigation efficiency and consistency.
- Our green surfaces have continued to be smooth and quick to putt on during the winter months.



## TEES

- Due to increased golf over the last two months, our par 3 tees are suffering from significant wear and tear. Most of our par 3 tees are small in size and shaded, so there has been little grass recovery over Winter.
- We estimate that weekly traffic on our course has doubled in the last 2/3 years and our tees bear the brunt of this.
- Where space permits, Course Committee is looking to increase the size of most of our par three tees. As they are generally in shade, we are planning to over sow most of them with fescue grass during spring to provide a thicker, year round cover of couch/fescue.
- The sixth tee will be closed for the next 6 weeks. It will be aerated, scarified, over sown, top dressed and rested until competition resumes.
- Earthworks to add new 'white' tees to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> holes will begin over coming weeks.
- Earthworks to level and extend the front of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> tees will begin soon if manpower and machinery permit. We apologise for the short term inconvenience, but see the coming weeks as a chance to progress these works with less interruption later on.

## **FAIRWAYS**

- In the coming weeks, our warm season fairway grasses will begin to come out of dormancy.
- They will be fertilised shortly to promote early season growth.
- We are still planning to go ahead with the Summer re-surfacing works on the 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> fairways at this stage, but planning will be guided by the clubs situation in regard to COVID restrictions.
- The spraying of fairways for various reasons will be minimal over the next 24 months. With the impending re-surfacing of all fairways over the next 2/3 years, it is cost-efficient to reduce spraying to fairways as each one will be individually 100% poisoned just prior to re-surfacing works.
- Strategic tree removal on the 8<sup>th</sup> fairway has increased the sunlight the fairway receives, but during Winter, most of the 8<sup>th</sup> fairway doesn't see sunlight until the afternoon. This fairway will be over sown with fescue to improve its year round coverage.

## **PRACTICE FAIRWAY**

- As members will be aware, the practice fairway is closed until further notice.
- Nursery areas will have iron and pigment applied which will speed up their move out of dormancy.
- Pre and post emergent sprays will be applied to increase the purity of the couch cover.
- A decision on which grass to use on all fairways going forward, will be made in November.

## **FESCUE NURSERY**

- Members will have noticed the area behind the Cart Shed has been sodded off. This is in preparation for the establishment of a fescue nursery. Our aim is to replace the fringes of all greens with an approx. 2m collar of fescue. This fescue collar will provide a smoother fringe area for golfers, but will also allow us to spray for the selective removal of couch from fringes, meaning it can't encroach onto greens.
- This will be a gradual fringe replacement over a number of years, depending on weather and finances.



## **BENT GRASS NURSERY**

A nursery of bent grass will be established over the next few months. Bent grass is what we have on our greens. This nursery will allow us to re-sod larger areas of greens if/when required. It will eliminate the need for plugs to be taken from greens to repair damaged areas.

Over time, it will also allow us to re-lay whole green areas if and when greens are resurfaced or new greens are constructed.

### TREES

- With a number of big limbs coming down over the last few months, the golf club is looking to work alongside the Recreation Reserve Committee and DELWP to provide a safe recreational environment for all users.
- A Sunday Working Bee cleared and re-shaped the drain and area between 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> greens to stop excess water reaching the left hand side of the third green. The area was cleared of dead plants and branches and was prepared for planting.
- 60+ trees have been planted in the area between 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. A big thanks to Ken Morrison for sourcing the plants and to Ken and Steve Jeffrey for planting and watering. The Tuesday volunteers staked and bagged all the planted trees.
- Further planting will take place between 1, 2, 17 & 18 in the coming weeks.



### CLEAN UP

- A big thanks to Sean and Mick O'Connor and the Course Committee who did a great job cleaning up the concrete where the cricket nets used to be. The concrete was taken away and the area smudged off to provide a much neater look to that part of the oval. Tuesday volunteers have also tidied up the hill and exposed some of our great local rock forms.
- Course Committee have prioritised the tidying up around work shed and soil/wood storage areas between now and Christmas.



### **COURSE SIGNAGE**

- Members co-operation in not driving golf carts over the black lines near greens is appreciated.
- We have deliberately reduced the amount of 'cart sign pollution' around the course but ask that cart drivers exercise common sense and course care in deciding where to drive.
- Members travelling from the cart shed to the clubhouse are reminded that the club expectation is that you follow the path beside the 3<sup>rd</sup> hole, the 4<sup>th</sup> tee and past the 1<sup>st</sup> tee to the clubhouse. And the same going back to the shed.

### **WORK SHED**

The Office in the Work Shed has been re-organised with the re-use of benches and cupboards removed from the Captain's Office. New pin boards, whiteboards and computer shelving has made the work area much more efficient and organised.

Dylan has worked with Andrea to streamline purchasing processes and has put together an extensive range of machinery replacement options, timelines and quotes for Course Committee and General Committee to discuss.

It is just on twelve months since Dylan has joined our club, building on Glen and Chris' great work over the previous decade. Dylan has shown enthusiasm, initiative and a constant desire to improve our course. Dylan understands the needs of a small country club, is constantly mindful of budget considerations and is very focussed on producing a golf course that is fun, challenging and playable for all members of all abilities. With Dylan experiencing all four seasons at our course, a month of 40C+ degree days and a pandemic, it has been an interesting ride so far. The Course Committee is looking forward to the days ahead with great optimism. We have a lot of short term and long term plans in place or being developed. While the immediate future is a little unclear in our COVID environment, we are working hard to ensure our long term planning for the course, machinery and infrastructure is thorough and within the financial capacity of the club, and that it all helps to improve our most important asset

I would also like to thank Ian Kerr for his many years of service on the Course Committee. Ian has chosen to have break from Course Committee commitments to prepare for the upcoming Club Championships!! Thanks Ian, your contribution has been appreciated by all.

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