

Golf Course Agronomic Report

Visit date : 10/07/19

General

Gerry Byrne - Director- Sports Turf Practitioners Ltd (STP) visited to meet Tim Poppinwell (Head Greenkeeper) and Paul Ryan (Deputy Head Greenkeeper) on Wednesday 10th of July 2019. The purpose of the visit was to review the golf course and prescribe updated work programme for the coming weeks.

The key Positives from this month's visit is to report on an excellently presented golf course and with the exception of fairways presenting at or above industry standards.

Agronomically, all prescribed and agreed programmes was carried out by the team resulting in a very healthy and disease-free golf course. Several fairways were sanded which will continue to have long term benefit from a levelling and drainage aspect, however problems in terms of overall smoothness and undesirable grass composition remains.

The golf course and the green surfaces are amongst the best I have seen all year and a credit to both Tim and Paul for their dedication in delivering the programme and greens to such a high standard. We challenge ourselves to be the best conditioned golf course in the region and develop a vision to compete with the inner M50 golf courses such as Elm Park, Milltown, Castle and Newlands. Both Tim and Paul are truly delivering on the surfaces they have control on, and we would like to commend them both for there dedication in delivering for the club.

Greens

The greens on the day of the visit were in truly excellent condition. Our agreed programme of little and often liquid fertilisation, chemical treatments and bi-weekly sand top-dressing is resulting in a very smooth surface for all to enjoy.

Recommendations for the coming month is to continue with the agreed programme which includes;

- **Sand Topdressing** to be applied on a bi-weekly basis
- **Vertical cut** to be carried out at minus 1, prior to sand applications
- **Plant Growth Regulator, Liquid fertilisation** - Monthly, as agreed
- **Wetting agent** – monthly, as agreed
- **Height of Cut** – to remain at 3.00mm
- **Fungicide** – Apply a translocated fungicide over the coming weeks to protect against Anthracnose/Microdochium disease which can become an issue during this time of year.

Key Objective: to hold the current green speed of approximately 9.5 Stimpmeter reading and remain disease free and smooth.

Green surrounds are good condition but would benefit with an application of 28.3.10 fertiliser to boost growth and provide a platform to frame the green surfaces with improved 'cut line' definition.

Tees

The tee surfaces are in good condition with excellent divot repairs carried out by the team. They are however beginning to lose colour and are due there second summer fertilisation which is recommended to be applied ASAP. Recommended blend is 28.3.10 which will give the same results at the surrounds. Importantly, it will bring strong growth for the remainder of the playing season.

Height of cut, for speed of maintenance, is to be kept at 13mm which is the same as surrounds

Fairways

Fairways are best described as in fair condition but agronomically good. Fertilisation and plant growth regulator are applied as recommended which is serving to give a good colour response and growth. Unfortunately, the issue of high composition of undesirable weed grass dominating the sward remains and will continue unless action is taken.

The short term solution is the hire of a tractor mounted brush which would help to brush up the offending trailing grasses or alternatively investigate the purchase of a brush attachment for the fairway mower which can be bought through Reel- Tech. This would improve the sward as the offending grasses would develop a more upright growth habit and therefore improved ball lie.

Long term solution is to develop an annual programme of outsourced scarification and importantly over seeding with a more drought tolerant and desirable amenity fescue / ryegrass blend. This coupled with the agreed sanding programme if adopted as an annual operational programme would dramatically improve their playability.

It is somewhat regrettable that the golf course is presenting so well and ahead of its competitive set but being let down by less than ideal fairway conditioning.

With an adoption of the recommendations, the improvements would be seen over the short term [1-3 years] but the long-term benefits will be improved playing conditions not only in the summer months but the shoulder seasons and winter.

It is acceptable that large scale drainage works [as previously reported], however, if understandable funds are not available, the adoption of grass conversion, scarification and sanding would have a dramatic affect to the playing conditions during the important playing season for members and guests.



Figure 1. fairway brush required to address trailing grasses

Continuing Recommendations;

- PGR + Nitrogen + (Fe) Iron to be applied 3 times by Harris Turf Improvements[next on Friday 12th July]

Rough / Bunkers

Rough is under full control with no issues to contend with. The boundary of the golf course was recently cut back and whilst track marks is noted from the agricultural tractor, it is fully expected to naturally repair. Weeds are not an issue and all trees have had a total herbicide treatment and are presenting well. A small number of trees require crown lifting which was discussed with Paul who will address in the coming days.

Bunkers are also presented very well, recently edged and contain an adequate amount of sand. Regular topping up is carried out by the team to keep a balance of sand to the bases.

New Wash Bay

The new wash bay is a fantastic addition to the facility and the club can be confident that you are fully compliant to all environmental regulations. The conversion from golf course waste to clean water is remarkable and the quality of both the installation and units is first class.



Figure 2. New wash bay installation

Conclusions

The golf course continues to improve into the summer season and delivery of the prescribed and agreed agronomic programme is fully delivered by both Tim and Paul. Additional works is required on fairways with discussions and agreements required on a long-term strategy to bring them to similar standards to the remaining key areas of the golf course. Short term, if brushing or the purchase of a brush attachment is facilitated, this coupled with liquid fertilisation will give adequate results for the remainder of the season.

Our next visit will focus on early development of our autumn schedules and winter programme, planned for mid to late August.

Gerry Byrne
Director
Sports Turf Practitioners (Ire) Ltd
11th July 2019