

Course Report – Winter 2015

Introduction:

As we enter into the final weeks of an historic year for Rathfarnham Golf Club it is apparent that the challenges ahead for myself and the course staff are somewhat different in many aspects from what went before.

Maintaining our high standards across 18 holes has brought into focus the need for increased professional training for the staff and improved machinery and equipment.

In both these areas we have been pro-active. From greenkeeper training in safe use of pesticides, to advanced chainsaw courses, to college based general greenkeeper training. In addition to these measures in the New Year we will employ the services of the Sports Turf Research Institute (S.T.R.I.), the pre-eminent provider of agronomy and advisory services to the golf and sports pitches industry. Their leading agronomist, Conor Nolan, will provide us with an in-depth analysis of greens performance based on detailed measurements and also provide us with wide ranging advice on all aspects of golf course maintenance.

One cannot review a period in the life of the golf course without reference to the weather. As happens periodically in our Atlantic maritime zone we have had very intense rainfall events. In the period between 1 November and 19 December 113mm of rain fell in Rathfarnham. This is far in excess of the norm for this period. The knock on effect of this amount of precipitation led to some course closure days. Whereas we have extensive drainage across the course there is a requirement for additional drainage to be installed primarily on the newly developed holes.

When we built the new holes, extensive main drainage lines were installed on the fairways. This winter we have surveyed the areas most affected by the high rainfall and are drawing up a drainage plan to be implemented next year. This will involve installing 8-10" deep slits filled with gravel at circa 600mm centers laterally across the fairways to connect with these main drains. They will then be topped off with a sand and seed mix. This is a tried and trusted method of rapid surface water removal and is common practice for newly developed golf course surfaces.

Tees and Fairways:

An increased height of cut on the tees and fairways has helped us maintain good playing surfaces in these areas.

Greens:

A second hollow tining was carried out in November using narrow $\frac{3}{8}$ tines to mitigate the increase levels of play. As in other areas of the course we are innovating and adapting to our new situation.

Trees:

This planting season we have embarked on a fairly intensive planting programme specifically on the new holes. This will give us increased definition and safety. We planted a mix of large trees – Populus, Quercus, Acer and standard trees – Betula, Cappinus, Fagus Sylvatica. Circa 140 in total. We also planted 250 whips of Birch and Alder in the area behind the 14th green and 9th tee.

In early January 1,200 gorse will be planted on holes 15 to 17 to further enhance the aesthetic and definition of these holes.

Conservation:

In early January we will commence a bi-annual bird survey to record and track bird life on Rathfarnham Golf Course. In this endeavor we have retained the services of an expert in bird identification and habitat.

Looking Ahead:

The winter work programme is ongoing and we plan to expedite some key parts of that in time for play in Spring.

Myself and the greenkeeping staff – John, Jimmy, Adrian, David and Séamus would like to wish all the Members a happy Christmas and New Year. We look forward to providing you with the highest possible standard of golf course in 2016.

Eddie Walsh
Golf Course Superintendent

