

Course Report – Autumn 2014

Introduction:

This report covers the period of this summer and early autumn – a time of intense activity in maintaining the current course and the construction of the new holes.

Greens:

At the moment the greens are in very good condition. The height of cut is 3.75mm which will be maintained throughout the winter. We had some disease pressure in late summer on a couple of greens. This disease is called Anthracnose (**base rot of Poa Annua**) it usually occurs after a long dry summer and was dealt with effectively. The programme of work on the greens during the summer was reflective of our more integrated approach to enhancing quality with overseeding and top dressing receiving priority.

Hollowtining took place early in August to facilitate the laying down of our new greens 15, 16 and 17. We use the cores from hollowtining the old greens to establish a sward on the new greens. This technique, which also incorporates intensive overseeding, was very successful and will give us consistent and uniform putting surfaces across our 18 greens. Green 14, the new par 3, was established in a similar way in September.

Hole 8 was re-turfed with sod from holes 8 and 9 and the extension to the new green 9 will also be turfed using 100m² of soil from the old 9th. All greens are growing extremely well and receiving regular seeding treatments and regular mowing.

Early hollowtining of the greens has worked out extremely well. We were able to overseed intensively and apply a heavy top dressing. This aided a very quick recovery which allows us to head into the winter months with very good and consistent surfaces.

Tees and Approaches:

The tops performed very well over the summer. They received regular overseeding, top dressing treatments and fertilizing. The installation last winter of irrigation to the last 7 remaining tees allowed us to produce very consistent surfaces through a very dry summer. We have just completed hollowtining of the tees and approaches. We will now proceed to overseed and top dress these areas.

In recent years a lot of research has been carried out on different grass cultivars and their suitability for different conditions. This knowledge, allied to our skill base, is being applied here in Rathfarnham across all our overseeding regimes. Our objective is to remain playing on grass tees throughout the winter.

Last year we inaugurated the grass pathways from tee to fairways. This has worked very well giving definition and a dry, firm walkway. These pathways receive similar treatments to the tee tops. The levelling and re-sodding of the 2nd tees, both men and women, will be carried out as part of the Winter Programme.

Fairways:

They have performed very well this summer and autumn, we are currently mowing at 18mm height of cut. We mow 3 times per week during the main growing season from April to October, varying the direction of cut each time to enhance presentation and control growth of the coarser grasses and prevent marselling (this is where if a sward is cut primarily in one direction an uneven surface develops).

Last April we top dressed the fairways as usual with 450 tonnes of sand, this greatly aids spring recovery and maintains drainage characteristics.

Next year with the 18 hole course up and running we plan to intensify fairway maintenance by applying some new techniques, primarily the application of plant growth regulators (P.G.R.). This will be similar to the regime we have for the tees and approaches and will produce a more consistent and dense sward.

This winter we will also vertidrain all fairways as part of the rotation of aeration techniques. Last year we used the shockwave.

Bunkers:

The bunkers that we have renovated to date have performed very well in all conditions. We plan to continue with this programme this winter concentrating once again on the worst performing ones – initially the 1st and double green bunkers.

Trees:

Except for watering of new trees, the majority of work on trees takes place during the autumn and winter period. Pruning, staking and removal of dead and decaying branches and trees.

New tree planting also takes place during the dormant season to improve definition and maintain our characteristic parkland style. This winter we also embark on a major tree and shrub planting programme on the 6 new holes. This is a major task. It is important we maintain the species mix that has served us well and locate all trees and shrubs in keeping with the more established parts of the course.

Conservation:

In the course of the construction project this summer the size of our main lake was increased by circa 1/3. This lake provides us with all our irrigation water for 18 green and tee complexes. It is also a resource for wildlife and with expert help we plan to embark on a specific programme of planting and water enhancement measures.

Conclusion:

Work on the new holes is virtually complete and we are now preparing to operate an 18 hole golf course. We have extra staff and resources and are using these to good effect. An additional greenkeeper, Seamus Walsh, joined the course staff this summer. He will study in Scotland at Elmwood College over a two year period in block release format and learn the rest of his profession on the ground here in Rathfarnham.

Based on Members' feedback, we have installed a new system on the water fountain on tee 12 to allow for a more frequent flow of water through the pipes and to avoid standing water. This ensures that water dispensed from the tap is fresh from the source.

There are a great many new areas of work that require our attention as we develop on 18 hole greenkeeping strategy but we are confident in our abilities and excited by the prospect.

Eddie Walsh
Course Superintendent