



Introduction:

This report covers the recent summer period, the opening of the 6 new holes and the culmination of the 18 holes project. On a very wet bank holiday Monday in June, Rathfarnham Golf Club opened as an 18 holes golf course. It is the result of many years of work carried out at different levels within the Club and an 11 month period of very intense construction activity. The main contractor on the project, EGS (European Golf Services), commenced site clearance on 1 July 2014, working to a detailed design drawn up by Jeff Howes, course architect.

All 6 greens and tee complexes are built to USGA (United States Golf Association) specifications, the benchmark for such works. Across the 6 new holes there is extensive main drainage installed on the fairways. This will allow us to install slit drainage when and where necessary as was carried out on the existing holes.

Tees & Fairways:

The new fairways received extensive sand top dressing and overseeding. This was in order to build up a free draining sand cap and create a dense sward of grass. We carry out these operations on an ongoing basis across the existing holes. Tees are of a uniform quality across the 18 holes with some exceptions in terms of levels and sward composition, which will be acted upon as part of the upcoming winter programme.

Trees & Roughs:

Extensive tree and shrub planting took place on the new holes with species matched to our existing mix of evergreens and deciduous trees and shrubs. The next phase of planting will continue that process with some larger specimens included in strategic areas.

Integration:

The main challenge for us now is to continue to integrate the different parts of the course to create uniformity of quality across the 18 holes.

Greens:

Hollow tining and overseeding has taken place extensively this July across the 18 holes. This has worked out very well and it is the optimum time for recovery. It will be an integral part of our maintenance programme in the future. When new greens are constructed the sand root zone used is in a sterile state. Over seasons of growth and development a community of micro-organisms colonise this root zone and a shallow layer of thatch develops. This is essential for the health and performance of the greens.

Micro-organisms counter disease pathogens and break down nutrients so they are available to the grass plant. Thatch provides resilience to the putting surfaces. During this transition period new greens come under extra pressure from pests and diseases and general wear and tear. We are monitoring them very closely and ready to use our mechanical and chemical controls.

Wildflower Areas:

On our new holes we have been gifted an opportunity to create some wildflower areas and heavy roughs containing tall fescues and bent grasses. This is a great opportunity to create pockets of biodiversity across the course with all the consequent benefits for wildlife. We have already created a wildflower area on hole 15 and tall grass areas on hole 17.

Practice Area:

The practice area has been constructed to a very high standard with the whole chipping area including the bunker, representative of areas that are found on the course.

Conclusion:

Having built and opened the new holes in less than a year the task now is to improve quality and consistency across our new 18 holes from tee to green. There is a learning curve involved in that, from scheduling of different operations, such as hollow tining, to the timing and frequency of our morning regime. It is a great opportunity and challenge in all aspects and we look forward to meeting that challenge.

Eddie Walsh

Golf Course Superintendent