

Course Report – Winter 2017

Introduction:

This winter has been dominated by long dry spells interspersed with brief wet or frosty periods. It has allowed us to present the course at its best on a day to day basis and carry out works in line with our 5 year plan.

Greens:

In the autumn we overseeded all greens using the vredo disc seeder. The seed mix used were traditional fescue varieties (Chewings Fescue and Slender Creeping Red Fescue). The results were extremely positive and can be observed as narrow green lines of new grass across the playing surfaces.

This is part of our ongoing overseeding regime that I have referenced in previous reports. We are having very good results in this process in the condition of the greens particularly during this winter period.

Tees and Approaches:

Tees:

We have maintained play on the vast majority of tee boxes this winter without the use of the mats. This is far more preferable from a golfing point of view. It does require us to intensify winter maintenance on these areas. Last autumn we used the same disc seeding technique on the tree tops as on the greens, using a rye/fescue mix of 20/80 followed by a sand top dressing which we will repeat monthly throughout the winter, applying circa 20 tonnes across the tee tops at each application.

This winter as part of the long term plan for the course we have levelled and re turfed the men's 2nd tee box, the white 4th tee box and the ladies 7th tee box.

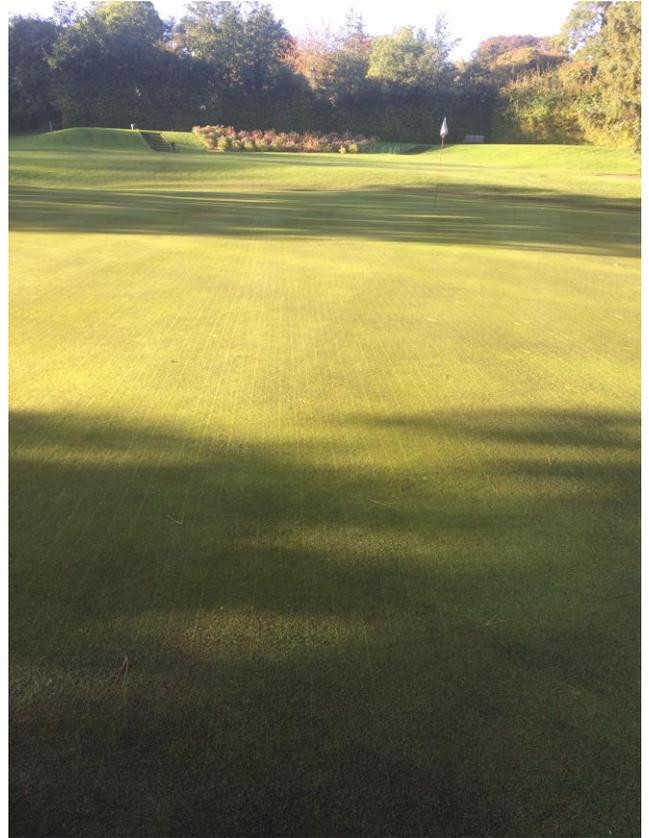
Approaches

As with the tee tops we have embarked on a major drive to improve the quality of the approaches.

Firstly we have increased the size of these areas to a minimum of 500m². These areas have been hollowtined, overseeded and sanded in early autumn and again overseeded using the disc seeder 3 weeks later and top dressed. The seed mix is a fescue/bent variety. The top dressing of sand will continue on a monthly basis applying circa 30 tonnes/hectare.

In the spring we will again overseed and top dress the tees and approaches and continue top dressing throughout the summer.

As part of these improvements to the approaches we are installing an automatic irrigation system in these areas. Initially on holes 1,2, 4, 6 and 18. Moisture control is an essential part of the equation for maintaining turf quality throughout the seasons.



Bunkers:

As part of the course 5 year plan, particularly with reference to the bunkers, we are installing the latest bunker lining membrane in 4 bunkers: - at the 1st, 4th, 6th and 9th. We have already trialed the system on the 15th greenside bunker and found it to be an excellent performer. The other greenside bunkers will be done in due course. Work will commence in mid-February and should take about a week.

Trees:

Tree planting is ongoing every winter here in Rathfarnham. We plant trees to enhance and improve our tree stock and to provide separation and definition of holes.

This year the six new holes will have an extra compliment of new plantings to enhance definition and protect our boundaries. The species we are planting are oak, beech, spruce, yew, holly and larch. They are of an excellent quality and good size ranging from 12-16 feet in height with girth of 12-16. Altogether we will plant circa 80 trees this season. All planting is carried out by our own staff.

Machinery:



This year we are purchasing two pieces of course machinery. A Tors ride-on greens mower and a tractor mounted wood chipper.

The greens mower is the very latest design and will provide us with an enhanced quality of cut and great reliability.

The wood chipper will enable us to mulch up branches and thinnings as we trim trees around the course. The wood mulch will be used around the base of trees and shrubs for weed suppression, thus helping to reduce pesticide use.

Conservation:

We are striving to substantially reduce our pesticide use across all areas of the course as mentioned above. The use of bark mulch as a weed suppressant greatly reduces the need for pesticides in these areas.

The other areas are the greens, tees and approaches where the increasing establishment of the finer grasses is allowing us to reduce inputs, particularly fungicide use on the greens. By the finer grasses I mean Slender Creeping Red Fescue, Chewings Fescue and Heriot Browntop Bent primarily.

Fairways:

This winter we have fertilized the fairways on a monthly basis using a light application of Nitrogen, Seaweed and Iron Sulphate applied through our dedicated ride-on sprayer. The results have been very good with excellent grasscover on the fairways throughout the winter. In the spring we will again apply circa 500 tonne of sand top dressing across all fairways. Some drainage needs to be carried out on certain parts of fairways which we will carry this out when identified conclusively.

Conclusion:

The mostly dry and mild winter this far has warranted us to maintain a more intense regime of maintenance across the course than would usually be the case. However, there are a myriad of winter work tasks being carried out from tree removal to allow light onto the greens at 13 and 14 to path maintenance to machinery maintenance. We are looking forward to delivering an enhanced course this spring.

Eddie Walsh
Course Superintendent