Greenkeeper's Report April 2016

Over the past month we have carried out the spring greens maintenance. This consisted of aerating and topdressing the greens to dilute the thatch.

Thatch is a problem because the natural process of breaking down organic matter living and dead stem/root tissue materials is often very slow. Invariably, because we are promoting vigorous grass growth, we end up increasing the problem. The plant produces more debris than it can break down, thus we get an accumulation of material which, over time, builds up into a thatch layer.

This accumulation of thatch can create an environment that affects sward quality in many ways:

- Excessive thatch can create a favourable environment for many pests and diseases.
- Thatch can influence water movement in and around the grass plant.
- Thatch can alter soil surface conditions, often producing a waxy layer that can prevent water movement into soils (dry patch).
- Thatch can influence soil temperatures.
- Thatch interferes with air movement around the grass plant.
- Thatch can affect mowing quality.
- Thatch can prevent effective use of chemicals and fertiliser applications.
- Excessive thatch affects ball pace and ball roll.
- Thatch will also affect the traction and shear strength of the turf surface.
- Thatch will affect turf grass quality

It is vital that we control the thatch. We do this by aeration, scarification and topdressing. It is essential we carry out the maintenance to the greens. This maintenance is a short term pain, for a long term gain.

Below is a description of what maintenance has been undertaken in the past month

Aeration

The greens where **Solid tined** using 8mm tines at a depth of 6 inches the week commencing 21st March to relieve any compaction and allow for gaseous exchange to take place. We also **Verti-drained** the greens using 12mm tines at a depth of 350mm. In the week commencing 11th April, we hollow cored the greens at a depth of 5.5 inches. This was carried out to remove thatch and allow sand into the profile which will allow the thatch to be diluted. We managed to hollow core, topdress, brush and roll all the greens in one day.

Top Dressing

Top Dressing was applied to the greens before Aeration. The dressing filled any undulations in the greens to provide a smooth putting surface.

Fertiliser

Greens and Approaches have been fertilised using seaweed folair feed. The greens will be fertilised again this week with a granular feed to help with recovery after the spring maintenance.

Irrigation

This month we have set the irrigation system up for the coming season. There are a couple of leaks that will be fixed over the next few weeks.

Aswell as carrying out routine mainentance we have managed to carry out little jobs that will make a differrence on the course. This consisted of:

- Divotted tees
- Bunkers topped up with sand
- Mole catching
- Trimmed around sprinklers
- Leaf collecting in brooks and hollows

Plans for next month

- Fertilise Greens, Approaches, Tees and Green Surrounds
- Light top dress on greens and approaches
- Growth regulator on greens, approaches and tees
- Overseed week areas in Rough
- Raise a few low sprinklers
- Repair Irrigation system
- Spray Broadleaf weed killer on tees and fairways

WHY DO WE AERATE AND TOPDRESS?

Aeration and topdressing are vital tools in producing healthy turf – short-term disruption for long-term benefits.

- Turf must have deep, healthy roots and this demands air
- Over time, the soil under a golfer's feet can become compacted, leaving the roots short of space to grow
- Aeration creates more air space in the soil and promotes deeper rooting, helping turf stay healthy
- Holes are created in the soil, allowing air and water in
- These spaces are then filled with sand ('topdressing'), allowing stronger roots to grow down deep into the soil
- Other aeration techniques can involve using knives to slice through the soil profile, or injecting the soil with high-pressure air

Aeration and topdressing are essential maintenance practices to ensure golf can be played all year round.