

Greens Director Report October 2020

Summary: A busy month on the golf front, where the effects of the pandemic have caused the compression of many events and competitions into the late part of the season, having lost effectively a third of the usual playing year due to lockdown. Many of the members will be wondering what is happening on the greens front and what the club are going to do about some of the damaged areas.

Greens: The Greens required a long overdue Hollow tining (HT), this improves root growth, and long-term health of our sand-based greens. In 2018 HT took place as planned in the August, this is deemed the best period, as the warm period beyond gives the greens time to establish before the winter, however, with the climate being what it is over the last decade or so, when is winter? Our grass continues to grow well into December some years, and as we remain on greens and not winter greens like some other courses, we could be mowing on Christmas eve at Normanton. In 2019 no HT was done, a series of events that with hindsight should have allowed HT to happen but it didn't. We regret this, but it had to be dealt with, then COVID closed the course apart from essential maintenance in March, just as the very wet period ended, almost 6 months of rain that saw the 7th fairway and other areas flooded for several months.

We hire the HT equipment in, this was not now available, once back playing you will all recall the slow rise to reasonable surfaces on our greens in July and August and being good on many greens until September. Inevitably we had to HT, the compression of our golf season caused a delay in the work, the HT machine booked for the 21st September after a period of some good golf for our members and visitors.

The HT failed to work as expected in many areas, in some areas it worked well like the 17th where it worked was perfectly. Sadly, on the 18th 1st and 4th the HT was not as good as it should have been, this caused the Head Green Keeper (HGK) to curtail HT having done 9 of the 18 holes. There are several theories as to why the tines stayed in the ground and not ejected as they should, and why, in places the turf was torn by the needles.

The greens committee met on Tuesday 6th Oct, minutes of the meeting are available on the club web site. The HGK explained, the failure to HT in 2019 was in part a contributory factor, the very long wet period from October 2019 to March 2020 another. Once in lockdown we had 10 weeks of virtually no rain, and although visually looking OK the greens will have suffered that shock, sprinkling continued during the period of no play and cutting remained at 4mm, but the long-term effects of these factors may have some bearing on the results we saw in September. We intend to get a professional ergonomist report carried out as soon as practical, the last one done was several years ago.

Sanding of the greens, or top dressing as it is known, is essential after HT, the hollows need filling, dry sand is finer, this is why it is left to dry on the surface before being dressed in. If it rains while this process is being conducted, the sanding may need doing again, sometimes several times, until holes are filled. We regret having sand on the greens during play, and recently during the ladies open day, which was very unfortunate considering the attempts to HT from the previous week, this was solely due to the process being drawn out due to the original failures and the weather.

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We plan to do this better in future, a day will be identified in Summer 2021, we will close the course for one day while HT takes place, the following days will be social competition only until the process is completed. Players must pick up and go around the greens staff while this process is being done to the greens, competition doesn't allow this to happen. More Solid tining will be done in the meantime, we may HT those greens that were missed, early in the season, we are monitoring the health of these missed greens, the ergonomist report will help us decide on the best course of action.

We are investigating the purchase of our own HT machine, this will allow us to be flexible on the date and frequency of HT, please see the minutes of the last Greens Committee for a full report.

Fairways are starting to show wear when wet, we are very close to beginning the winter work programme which will start the process of developing paths in the very worst wet areas first. Roping off, and white lining will start to appear, please abide by the spirit of these deviations, especially in the vicinity of greens. Members should role model the correct routing and demonstrate to their peers where to and not to, take buggies or walk. It is only by doing this, we will preserve a half decent playing surface next to greens, the state of the green's sides in early 2019 and other wet periods should be a constant reminder of how these areas can cut up if abused.

Bunkers have been pumped out when time permits, this can be a very consuming process and is unsatisfactory for members, we have too many large, deep bunkers. Many could be made less susceptible to flooding, there is no simple cheap solution. This winter we will attempt to improve some bunkers, starting with the 9th large greenside (RH), by improving drainage and possibly making two from one, this is to be decided with the club Golf Pro, who will also consider the playability on the hole and any effect this action may have. Rest assured, the committee are keen to try to make bunkers better regarding drainage, we ask you are patient with this group of enthusiastic members, who want better bunkers also.

The course will go onto Winter Tees from the 24th Oct 2020, fairway mats will only be implemented with the express advice of the HGK and the Club Professional but will be soon afterwards if the seasonal rainfall should dictate it. The World Handicap System (WHS) is coming soon, more on this from the golf team, you will notice signage and changes to help you understand and play under these new handicap rules, please be patient in this extremely busy and rapidly changing period we are all getting to grips with.

As always, the minutes and this summary are only part of the progress report, we are working very hard to bring improvements to the club and course, comments good and bad must help, so feel free to do so, we want the best for the club and course just like you do.

Andy Hall