



February 2019

Brief Report for Members:

It goes without saying that the greens are currently battling with the stresses that this summer has presented. I would like to give a brief outline and report to members to make clear some of the challenges that we have faced, why some things have occurred and what the plan is moving forward. It is very simple to focus purely on negatives, but I would like to highlight the many positives that are on the horizon.

Firstly, it is important to understand the number one factor that influences what myself and my team of guys do daily is the weather. Unfortunately, this is something we cannot control. Some facts relating to the weather this summer that have impacted us are...

- A 10-day period prior to Christmas we had a total of 150mm of rain.
- Since December 13th there has been 252.5mm rain total
- Since Christmas Day 35 out of 49 days have been above 32 degrees

These numbers are important as heat stress on cool season turf begins when air and soil temperatures exceed 32 degrees and root dysfunction will begin to occur over 36 degrees. To assist the greens through these periods of heat the staff will syringe greens in the afternoon. This is essentially applying a light amount of water via a hose to keep the canopy of the plant cool without adding excessive moisture to the soil profile. A policy was implemented this summer that once the temperature exceeded 35 degrees then there would be two greens staff on the course syringing greens, particularly on weekends and Thursdays. While the greens don't look great right now, they could have been a lot worse without this practice.

On the flipside when a green is too wet, then a problem that can occur is 'wet wilt'. This is essentially what happened to the 7th green in late December following the 10-day period of storms. The turf was effectively damaged and, in some areas, died off due to an excessively wet soil profile with high daytime temperatures. Combined with a high volume of foot traffic from golfers over the holiday period, it was just too much stress for the green. Too much water in summer months on greens will generally be more destructive than a dry summer. As you may understand at this point, it's quite the balancing act managing cool season greens on an old heavy soil profile in the summer months!

Looking ahead and what are our plans? The 7th green is progressing well. It has been needled twice with an 8mm solid and over seeded with bent grass. This bent grass has germinated nicely and is responding well to a light fertiliser application on a weekly basis. As the bent grass progresses, we will look to give the green a light dusting in about 10-14 days and as the weather permits. It is currently being mowed at 6mm with a walk behind mower.

We are still a couple of weeks away from thinking about lowering that height. The progress of the green will only increase as night time temperatures and humidity decrease heading into the autumn months.

The remainder of the greens were hanging in through January and not doing too bad all things considered, with the odd blemish here and there and stress in areas of high traffic (entry/exit points). Something that may not be known by most members is the fact that we had a main line break on the right of the first fairway. This was found on the morning of Monday 28th January. We were required to shut our pumps and irrigation system down until the line could be fixed by our irrigation contractors. We had 22mm of rain on the Sunday night which allowed us to be confident of getting through Monday without water. The irrigation guys were fantastic and got here first thing on Tuesday morning. The repair work was done, and we had water up and running by 3pm Tuesday. We were without water for 36 hours. Tuesday reached 35 degrees and the greens began to wilt before we had our pumps up and running again and could get water on them. Therefore, the greens that had no issues previously eg the 4th green, now are not so good. Hopefully that answers some questions.

Looking ahead...the silver lining is that it is predominantly the poa annua that has died off in the greens and the bent grass is doing quite well. I have adjusted my nutrition program on the greens to encourage and promote the bent grass. If we can have a larger bent grass population in the greens, then it will help us out long term with the summer stress. I will continue to monitor the progress of this. Our next goal will be to get to greens renovations in mid-March. This will be my first opportunity to do a renovation on the greens and something I am looking forward to. We will be doing a large hollow tine to remove excess thatch and organic matter that has accumulated over time. This will then be followed by appropriate applications of soil amendments and a heavy top dressing of washed sand. It is important to top dress with a washed sand on these greens due to the heavy soil profile and poor drainage characteristics. A washed sand will also encourage a deeper root system to develop over time. Something that is very important in the fight against summer stress on cool season turf. I cannot emphasise enough the importance of the upcoming green's renovations and with each one that we then do from now on, I genuinely believe it will help the greens become better long term. After renovations and into winter we will begin regular light dustings of the greens. Yet again, something that will benefit the greens long term in conjunction with regular needle tining and rolling.

I ask for your patience and understanding. It has been a tough summer and we are not alone with the challenges we are faced on our greens. Rest assured that myself and the rest of the staff are doing our absolute best to provide members with the best possible playing conditions on your golf course. I look forward to sharing more detail in my next greens report.

Justin Bradbury
Course Superintendent