



Knighton Heath Golf Club

Greens Report

March 2023

Graham Hastie
Course Manager

Greens

Maintenance carried out-

Greens cutting height now reduced to 5.5mm as we head into Spring
Greens cut 2-3 times a week
Combination of Ride on and hand mowers used to cut greens depending on firmness
Out front brushes added to mowers to stand up lateral growth
Greens brushed to clear dew on days of no cutting or rolling
Winter turf hardening applications (non pesticidal) to prevent disease occurrence
Soil moisture penetrant to move moisture away from surface
Holes changed twice per week
Greens blown of leaves and debris every morning
Switching and blowing of worm casts everyday
Daily checks to ensure greens are playable
Pitchmarks repaired when spotted
Greens maintenance carried out (see previous updates for any specific details)

Course

Tees cutting height lowered to 15mm as we approach spring once a week
Approaches cut at 12mm once a week
Daily bunker raking
Full rake, distribute sand in bunkers at least once a week
Strimming of bunker edges as and when required
Strimming of yardage markers as and when required
Fairways cut once this month
Semi rough cut twice to encourage definition and improve presentation
Blowing of all areas, greens, tees and areas on fairways
Winter mats brushed once a week
Wetting agent applied to approaches
Granular fertilizer applied to Tees, Approaches, Greens surrounds and walkways
Overseeding of high wear areas

Data-

Rainfall recorded:- 124.5mm (March average is 53mm)
Max temp:- 14.7°C (25/3/23) **Low Temp:-** -1.6°C (02/3/23)
Course closures:- 2 days (one during maintenance week)

Weather update

As always, I will begin my report with a little weather update. March was a distinct difference to February with virtually the same air temperatures but 113mm more rain recorded in the month. Meaning we became rather wet through the month and golfing conditions proving miserable as we were all hoping for the first signs of warmth. Now we are through that wet period I am sure it will prove to of been a true blessing. Let us not forget just how dry last summer was and the damage said weather caused. We have seen plenty of recovery through a combination of mother nature and some hard and targeted work on these areas. March's weather has ensured we are entering the growing season with a good amount of moisture in the ground. Wetting agents have been applied to Greens, Tees, Approaches and Green Surrounds, these will help water to penetrate deep into the soil and therefore be less susceptible to evaporation which the sun becomes stronger. Having water deeper in the soil will mean we can keep grass coverage later into the summer months as well as having the ability to respond to any summer rain we hopefully are blessed with.

Fertiliser applications

Through the month of March, we gradually upped the applications of fertiliser to the course with the aim that these would be out and ready to 'ignite' as soon as the conditions are correct (mild, moist and some sunshine). Last year we managed to apply fertiliser to the tees and maintain them to a high standard and so the aim this year is of course to replicate these conditions but also to extend these conditions to the approaches, and hopefully the green surrounds. A fertiliser with the makeup of 15-0-22 + 5%Mg with a 5-6-month release period (15% Nitrogen, 0% Phosphorous, 22% Potassium, 5% Magnesium) was applied to all these areas. We applied at a low rate as we would like all the benefits of well fertilised turf-excellent growth, good colour, good vigour, less weed invasion-without the excessive and uncontrollable growth leading to high mowing demands, effectiveness of the application will be monitored and adjusted for next season if required. With the 5-6 month release this one application should see us through to the end of the playing season before another application is required. We may well top up some of these areas with liquid fertiliser applications (liquid fertiliser applications trigger an immediate response but longevity is severely reduced) if we feel we need more recovery or require further green up for presentation reasons.

As we did last year, once we are happy these fertilisers are releasing, we will apply some growth regulator which aid in the sideways growth of turf. Sideways growth helps fill divots quickly, ensures a thick looking grass sward and better presentation.

Seeding and turfing work

Just as written above, this month we also began to get some seed into the ground in anticipation of some warmer weather. Using our very own Vredo seeding machine we have put out around 60kg of hard-wearing seed on some of the worn areas around the golf course. There are many more areas which would benefit from some seed being added to the ground but we can only do so much each year. We should see this seed coming up in April, it does take a while for the seed to tiller (thicken) and may well require overseeding as the seed will come up in the straight lines in which it is applied (some pictures of this are added at the end of this update) but again these areas will be revisited as and when we can.

As well as seeding we have also completed some turfing work. This began with the completion of the 17th fairway bunker, as mentioned before, the bunker was not a fair hazard as well as the liner becoming dislodged from the base creating a potentially dangerous issue if anyone was to play a full shot without knowing the liner was barely under the surface. This is a work in progress, first thoughts are that the right-hand side of the old bunker will become fairway while the left-hand side of the bunker will remain uncut and effectively a grass bunker. This will be constantly reviewed as we begin to mow the area.

Recovery from Maintenance week

Previous updates have been made regarding the maintenance working undertaken during the week of 6th March (check back on those if you wish for an update) but an update as to how the greens have recovered and repaired follows. Greens fertiliser was applied the week after maintenance week and has now ensured we are fully repaired for the start of spring. Unfortunately, we have yet to add any more top dressing to them. This has been because of the rain creating softer greens not ideal when trying to drive a machine loaded with 1.5 tons of sand (plus machine weight) over them. This process is mainly to ensure we have smooth surfaces to putt on, driving over the greens while wet would go against the whole point of the process and so we will be applying some very light top dressings to the greens as and when conditions allow (being such light dressings this will not impact on play).

Disease

While we did extremely well to survive (most of) the winter without any signs of disease on the greens we have had to apply a fungicide to the greens this month. Most noticeable on the front of the 17th green was the appearance of Fusarium patch. A disease which thrives in cool, damp and low light levels and so Autumn and early Spring are the main times for an attack.

We can put the lack of disease down to many factors, I believe the main one to be that we raised the cutting height of the greens all through the winter months meaning they had more grass coverage on them allowing them to absorb more light and therefore improving their chances to photosynthesise. While winter doesn't offer much chance of photosynthesis, and when I say we raised the cutting height it was only by 3mm. But when we think greens cutting height in the summer is 4mm by raising them 3mm we add an extra 75% of the grass blades length. Along with this we used a fertiliser mix which targets plant health and maximises the grasses natural defences to protect itself from infection, only mowed greens when they were firm enough to handle the pressure, ensured morning dew was always removed as early as possible and used temporary greens if necessary. While I'm sure many of these techniques have been used in the past and will be used in the future, I hope you find it interesting as to how we deal with the conditions we are faced through the winter.

While managing our greens through the winter in good shape was the priority, now that we have, it bodes well for the season ahead. I'm sure many clubs who have suffered from disease infections through the winter will have to ensure any scars which are left need to be filled in, repaired or plugged before they can begin to push their greens hard in search of some good playing conditions which we all crave. We are nearly there already, while it is still early in the year, once the weather picks up, we are confident the greens will be a pleasure to putt on and winter will be a distant memory once again.

See you all out on the course and here's to another great golfing season.

Graham Hastie
Course Manager



Our process during maintenance week. There is around 2 tons of sand spread on the green first, then our Wiedenmann spiking machine punches holes as well as some sand deep into the soil. We then dress and brush again until the holes are filled



An example of the turfing work. This is the right-hand side of the 8th. We have also seeded around this area and look forward to seeing some improvement to this area this year



Here you can see the lines created by the seeder. These tram lines have plenty of seed dropped into them as they are cut. This ensures the seed has good soil contact and improves our chances of seed germination



On Wednesday 15th March our wonderful irrigation system was primed and set up for the season ahead. As March was so wet it isn't in high demand as yet but to know it is up and running means whenever it is required it is there ready to support us