



Knighton Heath Golf Club

Weather and course status update

I hope everyone is still enjoying the unseasonal weather we are experiencing at the moment (apart from the rain). Sunday afternoon into Monday, we had a dry spell of around 12 hours and temperatures in the mid to high teens with the mercury hitting 20 degrees on Saturday just passed! This weather is wonderful for grass growth-in fact this is without doubt the best growing conditions I have experienced in my 8 months here at Knighton Heath. So much so that we are cutting all playing areas more than any time in the year. This has been great for recovery of the summer drought we had. Fairways, surrounds and approaches are recovering extremely well but this does come at the cost of many man hours and leaving us less time to begin winter projects and to prepare the course for winter. Plus, at this time of year we have the leaf drop to contend with.

On top of this the rain has returned.

There was a point in August this year when we thought it may never rain again! Just October yielded 115.5mm of rain (our wettest month of the year and 28mm over the average of 87.5mm) 27.5mm more than our next wettest month of the year which was June. We have most certainly needed this rain to return but unfortunately most of this rain has fallen in heavy downpours (a change in our weather patterns which we need to adjust to) which cause wash outs of paths, bunkers and some puddling of playing areas. As I finish writing this, we arrived at work to yet another 17.5mm of rain overnight along with some 50mph wind gusts. One of our forecasts also predict another 54mm of rain to fall over the next 7 days. If we have anywhere near this amount then we will possibly see some closures and definitely Amber and Red course status in play. We never wish to do so but this is to protect the golf course from any unnecessary damage which would have long lasting effects as we head into winter.

The weather patterns of short heavy rain bursts have caused the bunkers to become very compacted; we know this and look forward to raking and presenting them as they should be again but with the amounts of rain coming through at the moment it is not worth us spending a full day with all the guys raking bunkers only for them to be completely flattened and washed out again the very next day or potentially the same afternoon. Bunkers are being raked daily but only to tidy up any damage and foot printing from the previous days play, again we do fully understand that in an ideal world we would be fully raking these every day but with the other tasks which are currently required this is not possible and certainly not the best use of our time.

We now encourage all golfers to begin to think about where they are wheeling trolleys and driving buggies around the course. Last thing we want to do is put any form of traffic control out on the course in order to protect areas close to greens and approaches, but we will if these areas begin to get worn and damaged through high traffic in delicate areas. As a general rule we encourage golfers not to walk between bunkers and greens as these are very narrow walkways and therefore wear very quickly. Please also avoid clearly wet areas, areas of poor grass coverage and all approaches as much as possible.

We also encourage everyone to make a concerted effort to repair divots and pitchmarks. With softer greens through the winter, pitchmarks become deeper and more of an issue so please do make an effort to repair yours and any others which you notice. Softer fairways also usually mean more divots and so please also repair these as much as possible, a divot replaced well within 10 minutes will fully repair within a week. We will continue to divot fairways as and when we can but seed germination is slow through winter, while divots will heal completely if replaced quickly and carefully.

This week we have begun bringing in the winter tee mats to be cleaned; these have been a job waiting to be done for a while but with the extra growth we have experienced it has been tough to find the time. Firstly, we will concentrate on the par 3's. Once these are clean, we will monitor how the par 3's are handling the wear. When we feel the tees are becoming damaged, we will swap all par 3's over to the mats for the remainder of winter. For the rest of the tees, we will monitor these daily from now on and swap them over to mats if we feel they are becoming excessively worn. I would really like to try and keep play on grass tees for the entire year but this may not be possible and so will be monitored through the winter. 16th tee has already shown how wet it can become and won't be long before tee markers are moved over onto the mat. This is a tee we will be putting some drainage in through the winter in order to keep the tee open as long as possible through next winter and beyond. During this winter we will monitor all tees and create a plan for future drainage work to ensure we can have grass tees all year round in the near future.

Having enjoyed the summer playing season I now look forward to what the winter has to offer. I'm still amazed at how well the site drains generally, like the 16th tee, there are a few areas which are quite concerning but as the figures above support, we have been through a very wet October. Hoping this weather will break soon and nature can breathe a sigh of relief when some frosts, cooler and drier weather arrives.

Look forward to seeing you out on the course.

Thanks for reading

Graham Hastie

(Course Manager)