

Greens Chairman Course Update

November 2019

It has been a while since the last report and I must apologise for that. In the interim months of September and October the course has stood up to the deluge of rain. Many members courses have been closed around the region with little prospect of them opening. Our course has always drained well in comparison to many others and the greens team have worked hard to keep the course open whenever they can. Thanks to everyone who has carried their bag when asked and I would ask all members who must use trolleys to be mindful of where they are guiding them. The greens team are limiting the amount of machinery that they take onto the course in an attempt to avoid tyre marks damaging the course. The benefits of keeping the fairways at 19 mm during the season are paying off now and good lies are available using the placing rule. You can rest assured that the greens team will open the golf course whenever possible and avoid the use of winter greens whenever they can.

The relentless rain has severely affected the golfing calendar and has also affected our greens. Over the last couple of weeks the ground has become so saturated that even short downpours have been causing puddles. It is no surprise that the greens which are the youngest such as the 4th, 10th and the back of 12th are the ones that hold up to the weather most. Due to their more recent construction they have least amounts of thatch in them. Work will continue on all of the greens to combat the development of thatch. The next scheduled visit from the sand filler for all greens will be in March 2020. I have spoken to my unofficial course consultant and he has expressed a few concerns around the possibility of a cold spring delaying the repair process however, we have decided to proceed on that date and avoid the maintenance to the greens in the height of summer.

The 13th green remains a focus of our attentions. The thatch treatment is starting to work in some parts of the green however there is an extremely stubborn patch in the centre of the green which needs as much invasive action as we can give it. From the two pictures seen below you can see the samples on the right have extensive thatch and have a blackened look where anaerobic bacteria are thriving. It smells great, a bit like the bottom of a duck pond. If you ask one of the greens team I am sure they will show you the section and underneath it if you ask them. This section is very damp and water cannot drain through it quickly. Water is held in the upper part of the green which causes the turf to become spongy. The samples on the left look a lot healthier and have come from the outsides of the 13th green. Further aggressive treatment is needed to break up this thatch and establish the correct balance of sand and soil beneath the surface.



You may have noticed slits in the 13th and 8th greens in an attempt to further treat the thatch and aerate the greens. The blades used for this cut around 9 inches down and vibrate at the bottom creating a wider space there. The invasive work will continue on all greens with an extra focus on the 13th. You can rest assured that during the winter we will play the 13th green whenever possible.



The greens team is always mindful of the golf club budget and have taken steps to reduce outgoings. It has been necessary to reduce the number of staff working on weekend mornings to one. This isn't ideal however, we are working to minimise the impact that this will have on playing conditions. One area of concern is the raking of bunkers. The bunkers will be raked by the staff on Fridays however they will not be raked on the weekend mornings. All players are reminded to rake the bunkers after they have played. Further to this the committee have adopted a winter rule that has been brought to our attention from a member of Brancepeth. The committee have decided that when winter rules are in operation a player may lift their ball in a bunker, rake the sand then replace the ball without penalty. This should avoid any adverse lies caused by winter conditions.

Unfortunately there are no planned course improvements this winter however routine maintenance will continue in preparation for next year.

The course has been officially measured on Monday 4th November in accordance with the rules specified in CONGU UHS Appendix A. I am told that the CONGU handbook is the bedtime reading of the people on the competition committee. This might go some way to explaining why they have such annoying personalities (*"Harsh" – Comp Sec*). The measurement is in preparation for the assessment to be done with regards to the new handicapping system to be introduced in November 2020. Between ourselves and the competition committee the members will be regularly updated about how we envisage the course to be set up for the assessment and in the future. The ultimate goal is to obtain the best possible golf course fit we can get for all golfers.

If you want to know more ask the Greens Team on the course. They like to keep the members informed about what is going on and why it is necessary to do it.

Enjoy your golf,

The Greens Team