



ON A ROLL IN SWITZERLAND

By using the technique of Koroing, Course Manager Richie McGlynn of Blumisberg Golf Can Country Club, Fribourg, Switzerland, has kept the course fully open during extensive changes.

BIGGA member Richie joined the club in 2011. He found that the fairways in particular had severe problems relating to compaction, excessive thatch and a dominant poa sward, resulting in issues such as dry patch, dieback and chafer grub infestation. So he began the first stage of an ambitious ten-year project to renovate all the fairways without closing any holes. Various renovation practices were considered to achieve this, culminating in the decision to strip the existing turf off the worst areas, decompact the ground and reseed with a new grass mixture.

Richie looked to other sports for inspiration. Knowing how professional groundsman in other sports achieved rapid pitch renovation, he wanted to know if the same method could be applied to golf fairways.

The Koro Field Top Maker is a heavy-duty fraise mower and is a primary tool in the pitch renovation process. It removes unwanted surface matter such as poa-annua, thatch, weeds or the entire surface to a depth of 50mm.

Richie bought a Koro Field TopMaker 1500 complete with digging rotor, an Imants Shockwave 220 and a Dakota 550 trailer.

In October 2012, after using the Shockwave 220 to decompact the fairways down to a maximum of 38cm, the worst part of a fairway was stripped with the Koro. The area was then overseeded with a Vredo Compact seeder, using a mix of 60% Fescue, 20% Ryegrass & 20% Kentucky bluegrass.

Some growth and regeneration was evident before the course went into winter dormancy, but by the time the course reopened in the spring, the results were outstanding.

Richie said: "We are now into the second stage of our ten year fairway renovation project, and I believe we made the right decision not to close any of the holes during the renovations."

"We are taking out sections of fairways one by one. When we tackled the third fairway last July, we removed a third of the section in question and the golfers could play towards the left of the hole.

"We then made three dropping zones for those that were just that bit too far right. Within five weeks we had it open again, first teeing up their shots, and a few weeks later they were able to play normally."

There was some initial opposition from members, but the difference between the untreated fairways and the newly renovated areas soon became very apparent during July and August.

Richie added: "The difference was so striking, that when we came to work on the other side of the fairway, there was far more support this time. In fact two members actually took the trouble to go to the office and remark at the huge difference it had made. So thankfully we seem to be winning the support of the players – which is half the battle!"

The effectiveness of Koroing and the fast recovery period is the secret of Richie's approach.

Over time he will completely renovate the whole course with minimum disruption and maximum improvement for the future quality of golf played at Blumisberg.

HEALTH AND SAFETY POSTER

A reminder to BIGGA members that the old Health and Safety poster became illegal on 1 April and has been replaced by a new, legal version. For more details visit www.hse.gov.uk



David Blackmur

We are saddened to hear that Plumpton College's David Blackmur has died after a short illness. David Golding, Education Director at The GTC, has paid this tribute.

"David's passion for greenkeeping was second to none and many of today's Course Managers and Head Greenkeepers owe so much to him, as he was not only a great turf lecturer, but one of life's true gentlemen.

"He was synonymous with Plumpton College for nearly 40 years and instrumental in producing students and finalists for the Toro Student of the Year Award.

"I have a contact in BIGGA who has a lasting memory of David dressed immaculately as ever wearing cords and strolling down the Las Vegas Strip with his sunglasses on looking around as if he was in a dream. He could not have been further away from his love of the countryside and his beloved family and Sussex home!

"The GTC's thoughts are with his family and colleagues at Plumpton College. We have lost a true turf legend."