Course disease alert!

Dr Kate Entwistle offers details of two new diseases which have been identified on UK golf courses

Rapid Blight

Two newly emerging turf diseases have recently been confirmed in samples received from golf courses in the UK and Ireland and it is suspected that they are more prevalent in areas of fine turf than are currently recorded.

During 2012, The Turf Disease Centre will be collating information on turf samples received for analysis that are positively identified with either of these two diseases and a summary will be published later this year to show their recorded regional occurrence.

The most important step in effective turf disease management is the identification of the cause and with the apparent emergence of these new disease problems, this fact has never been more important.

Rapid Blight - A non-fungal disease

In 2004, turf samples were received from a golf course in the UK where the greens were showing a progressive decline in turf quality. Patches of affected turf up to 30cm across were becoming red/brown in colour, water-soaked in appearance and thinning out due to the loss of Poa annua and Agrostis spp. from the sward.

An analysis of the turf identified the presence of a non-fungal organism called Labyrinthula within the plant tissues and a disease known as Rapid Blight was recorded for the first time in Europe. Subsequent collaboration between The Turf Disease Centre and Dr Mary Olsen at the University of Arizona, confirmed the identity of the organism as L. terrestris, a new species of Labyrinthulid that Mary had initially identified in 2002 as the cause of this increasingly important turfgrass disease.

Over the past three years, The Turf Disease Centre has received a small number of turf samples affected by Rapid Blight that have originated from Ireland, Spain and Portugal but it is believed that the incidence of this disease is much higher than has currently been recorded.

In Spain, the disease showed dramatic development of symptoms on creeping bentgrass greens (with patches up to 2m diameter) and extensive discoloration and turf loss on fairways (Fig. 1 & 2). The severity of the problem is correlated with not only the grass type that is present but also ambient temperature and the level of salinity in the rootzone or applied irrigation. Poa species are very heavily affected by this pathogen, as too are Lolium perenne and Agrostis spp. Warm-season turfgrasses can harbour Labyrinthula within the plant tissues but they don't show evidence of any disease.

If these grasses are over-sown with cool-season turf, the young seedlings inevitably become infected and disease symptoms will develop.

Symptoms can develop when temperatures rise above 15°C and salinity levels are >2.0/8/m (although Labyrinthula has been isolated from turf growing in much lower salinity conditions). Because the causal organism is not a fungus, most fungicides will have no effect either on the organism or on the development of symptoms. However, research completed by Dr Olsen and other researchers across the USA has shown that the active ingredients pyraclostrobin, trifloxystrobin and mancozeb, can provide effective control but that results are much better if products are applied prior to the onset of disease, rather than curatively.

In order for the correct product to be applied effectively, the presence of this Labyrinthula sp. must be accurately identified but because it is not a fungus, L. terrestris can’t be cultured in the laboratory in the same way that fungi can.

During 2011, turf samples in which Labyrinthula was again detected, were received from golf courses in Ireland and the UK.

In the UK, the symptoms on the affected course had been confirmed as being Anthracnose disease and managed accordingly (Fig. 3 & 4), but lack of recovery prompted an analysis that eventually identified the real problem.

Due to the way in which Labyrinthula affects the plant, the sward initially becomes yellow, then becomes red in colour before the tissues eventually ‘rot’ and the sward thins. The symptoms can appear very much like Anthracnose (or Take-all Patch disease in Agrostis-dominated turf) but there will be no distinct blackening of the crown tissues, symptoms that are typical of Anthracnose Basal Rot.

Rapid Blight is considered to be a unique example of an emergent plant disease potentially induced by human activity (Douglas et al, 2009) and I am sure that in the future it will be confirmed on more amenity areas where water with high salt content is used for irrigation.

Now that we have learned how to identify this disease, sample analysis can confirm its presence and potentially save significant management time and costs by allowing implementation of effective control options. Detailed information on Rapid Blight disease can be found in the article Rapid Blight: A New Plant Disease, by Showell, et al, 2005.

Further Information


Fig. 3(TOP) and 4(SECOND TOP) Rapid Blight in the UK, 2011. General symptoms typical of Anthracnose Basal Rot. (Photograph courtesy David Stansfield, David Stansfield Ltd)

Fig. 5(ABOVE) and 6(INSET ABOVE) Rapid Blight on creeping bentgrass in Spain

INSET ABOVE: Fig. 2. Fairway infected and disease symptoms will develop (with patches up to 2m diameter) from the sward. RTF Disease Centre & Dr Mary Olsen, University of Arizona.

ABOVE: Fig. 1. General symptoms of Rapid Blight in the UK, 2011 (photograph courtesy T. Kvedaras, ITS Ltd).

Brown Ring Patch
Brown Ring Patch - A non-fairy ring disease (shown left)

During 2007, a sample received for analysis from a golf course in Portugal, was confirmed as having the fungal disease known then as Waitea Patch. This was the first known record of it in Europe.

The disease is caused by a Rhizoctonia-like fungus and although the symptoms closely resemble those of superficial fairy rings or thatch fungi, this Rhizoctonia-like fungus is not related to fairy-ring causing fungi.

Since 2003, this new disease has been increasingly recorded on Poa annua turf across the USA and more recently on Poa trivialis (Wong & Kamiński, 2007).

However, prior to the recognition of this problem in the United States, the disease was first recorded as developing on Agrostis palustris turf in 1994 in Japan (Toda et al, 2005) where the symptoms developed as brown rings and was given the common name of Brown Ring Patch. On Poa annua, the affected turf shows symptoms of coalescing yellow rings, often with a darker green sward inside of the yellow ring. Unlike fairy rings, this new disease does not have any ‘sharpened’ smell associated with the infected turf and a microscopic analysis of the isolated fungus can confirm the clear difference between the causal fungi.

However, if infected turf is incubated under conditions of high relative humidity for 24hr, fungal mycelium will develop in the sward, at the base of the turf and over the surface of the exposed rootzone and these symptoms can appear like those for fairy rings.

Temperatures above 16°C can initiate disease development and the symptoms are often more severe where rootzone nitrogen and water levels are low. Because the disease was initially recorded on Agrostis turf, the common name of Brown Ring Patch has been increasingly adopted for this disease but Waitea Patch continues to be used by some researchers.

In 2010, The Turf Disease Centre received reports of unusual fairy ring developments on golf courses from across Europe (Fig. 5) and DNA analysis completed by AFBI (Northern Ireland) on the isolated fungus, has now confirmed the presence of this new disease in the UK, Ireland and Germany.

Due to the close similarity in symptom development to superficial fairy rings, it is likely that this new disease of Brown Ring Patch is developing more widely across Europe than we are currently aware of but is being understandably mis-diagnosed as superficial fairy rings.

As with the non-fungal disease of Rapid Blight, Brown Ring Patch can be confirmed by laboratory assessment but for this fungal disease, isolation of the fungus and microscopic analysis of the developing structures (as well as an DNA analysis) is required for accurate identification.

The realisation that these new turf diseases are developing across Europe is due in no small part to Course Managers and Head Greenkeepers in recognising these atypical symptoms and requesting formal identification and I am very grateful to them for working with me to confirm these diagnoses.

In addition, I would like to thank A. Pereira Jordão, Lda, Portugal for sending the first turf sample diagnosed as Rapid Blight, Brown Ring Patch received in 2007, David Stansfield (David Stansfield Ltd) for collaboration regarding the recent Rapid Blight outbreak that was confirmed in the UK during 2011 and the Regional Managers of Headland Amenity Ltd and Tony Kvedaras (ITS Ltd) for collaboration regarding the outbreaks of Brown Ring Patch in Ireland and the UK.

During 2012, their continued collaboration on these new diseases will be very much appreciated and in addition, the Technical Representatives and Area Managers at Everris Ltd, Rigby Taylor Ltd and Syngenta Crop Protection UK Ltd have also indicated their willingness to notify me of possible outbreaks of these new disease problems.

Collaboration on this work is not restricted – if you believe that either of these new diseases are a problem on your course, please get in touch to discuss how we can help. All Club details will remain confidential and only regional data will be used to identify the distribution of these diseases in any future articles.

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Viva Las Vegas

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Saturday, February 25 - Polo Towers, Las Vegas

It was an early start for some but everyone was keen to begin this adventure together. We were met at Garyvick by Bernhard and Co.’s Kim Furrrell who had organised the trip, and one long flight later we were being warmly welcomed at the hotel, Polo Towers – each of us split with a one-bedroom apartment. The Hotel was right on “The Strip”, which was convenient for our first outing together, taking in the sights, having a bite to eat and a few beers.

Sunday, February 26 - Angel Park Golf Club

Today we had the opportunity to play golf or take a walk around Angel Park Golf Club. We were joined by Jim Croxton and Andrew Mellon, and we all experienced the high level of customer service.

Complimentary golf, clubs, carts and even balls and tees were organised by Tom Complimentary, Golf Course Superintendent, who happened to be English. James came across as very professional, polished and comfortable, speaking in front of everyone. At this stage of the year the Bermuda grass roughs, fairways and tees were dormant. The tees are over-sown with Perennial Ryegrass, but the rest of the course remains yellow with dormant Bermuda grass.

The decision to not over-sow the fairways and rough was made by the club in order to utilise the money saved towards preparing for the PGA tour event. The greens were a more familiar cool season Creeping Bentgrass (Penn A4). Half way along the back nine, we visited the very impressive maintenance facilities, which was absolutely spotless and probably the best-organised facility I have ever seen. James explained how the staffing is structured and how tasks were communicated, including using a Plasma screen in the crew room linked to his computer to communicate tasks for the day.

Monday, February 27 - Course Visits, TPC Summerlin and Paiute

An 8am meet in the morning dictated the previous evening’s events and we were all bright-eyed and bushy-tailed for our day of Golf Course visits. Kim and Steve Nixon, Bernhard and Co., hosted the day with the first visit to TPC Summerlin, home of the PGA Tour’s “Justin Timberlake Shriners Hospitals for Children Open”, and where Tiger Woods won his first ever Professional Tournament.

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Our second course visit of the day took us to the desert on the outskirts. Paiute Golf Club Resort is owned by the Paiute Tribe, a Native American tribe who have made their money through Smoke Houses. The resort consists of three 18-hole courses with each course measuring over 7,000 yards, including the “Wolf Course” measuring over 7,000 yards. After a stunning lunch, Jeff Reid, Director of Golf Course Maintenance, led us down to the Maintenance facilities, which were first class.

The three courses are maintained by 55 staff. As with both of the courses that we visited, a tremendous amount of emphasis is put on the irrigation of the turf with temperatures regularly reaching 43-44°C and an average of just over four inches of rainfall per year!

At Paiute, there are four wells, which are owned by the tribe, from which the club extract water to fill reservoirs. In the summer they can use up to 4 million gallons of water per night for all three courses. Annual usage of 880 million gallons! Thanks to Jeff and Jake at Paiute for making us all feel so welcome.
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Thanks!

I would just like to take this opportunity to thank Stephen Bernhard and all his team for giving us this unforgettable experience and opportunity. The Company is a credit to the Industry and should be applauded for its forward thinking in offering opportunities like this. Special thanks to the amazing Kim Furrrell, whose organisation and dedication towards the trip will always be remembered.

To BIGGA and in particular, Jim Croxton, Sami Collins and Andrew Mellon, for guiding us through the process and sharing the experience.

For me, it was a career highlight and I have come away from this feeling inspired, better educated, better informed and better connected to the fantastic network we have within our global industry. It was the perfect balance between Work, Rest and Play. A lot of work, little Rest and sufficient Play! This trip was all about experiencing as much as you can possibly take in and making the most of what is a truly unforgettable experience. George Pitts.
From day one the whole experience was amazing. Getting ten guys together from around the country and for all of us to get the way we did was fantastic and you couldn’t ask for a more enthusiastic and professional delegation party. Seeing the facilities and Creeping bent greens was excellent.

It is the first time I have been able to compare the Creeping bentgrasses at Rockcliffe Hall with somewhere else and be to around the same level as such a quality venue was satisfying to say the least. Pete Newton, Head Greenkeeper, Rockcliffe Hall GlCC.

Every aspect of the trip catered for all levels of candidates within the industry from Assistant Greenkeepers, Deputies, Course Managers and Workshop Managers. Every BIGGA member should apply for this trip of a lifetime. Not only do you personally benefit, but your employer and fellow work colleagues can feed off the knowledge you have gained.

Daniel McGrath MG, Course Manager, North Foreland GC.

Highlights of the trip for me were the education and the show. Yes, I really did enjoy the American way of greenkeeping and found it extremely fascinating even though I reckon they’re about 40 years behind in real greenkeeping! Lol. Though I reckon they’re about 40 years behind in real greenkeeping! Lol. I’ve been Greenkeeping now for over half my life and in that time I’ve made some great friendships and had some fantastic experiences but I have to say being part of this year’s Bernhard’s Delegation tops them all. The camaraderie within the group was superb and the trip itself gave me the opportunity to broaden my knowledge base through top class education and networking.

Jaimie Acton, Head Greenkeeper, Worlebury GC.

When I was selected to be one of the lucky ten delegates to attend the GIG show, I felt honoured and extremely proud. It was a trip of a lifetime and has inspired me to expand my educational qualifications. Spending a full week with nine other very knowledgeable guys, three of whom are MGs, was a fantastic experience and I have no doubt learned a lot from them and made a great bunch of friends. David Gray, First Assistant, Ladybank GC.

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Graeme Gallimore, Course Manager, Leasוכה GC.

What a great bunch of delegates, our feet never touched the ground. From a learning point of view our education never stopped, it didn’t matter where we were or who we were talking to, the whole group was sharing knowledge, ideas and passion! My personal highlights were the workshops at TPC Summerlin and Plaue, they were big, spotless and professional.

Stuart Hall, Workshop Manager, John O’Gunn’s GC.

I love everyone at work has been asking me how my holiday was but if someone were going to a conference in Vegas I may have thought the same, but our agenda was full on. We also found out how well educated our American cousins are with seminar after seminar being presented by professors and doctors cousin are with seminar after seminar being presented by professors and doctors. I love how everyone at work has been asking me how my holiday was but if someone were going to a conference in Vegas I may have thought the same, but our agenda was full on. We also found out how well educated our American cousins are with seminar after seminar being presented by professors and doctors. I love how everyone at work has been asking me how my holiday was but if someone were going to a conference in Vegas I may have thought the same, but our agenda was full on. We also found out how well educated our American cousins are with seminar after seminar being presented by professors and doctors. I love how everyone at work has been asking me how my holiday was but if someone were going to a conference in Vegas I may have thought the same, but our agenda was full on. We also found out how well educated our American cousins are with seminar after seminar being presented by professors and doctors. I love how everyone at work has been asking me how my holiday was but if someone were going to a conference in Vegas I may have thought the same, but our agenda was full on. We also found out how well educated our American cousins are with seminar after seminar being presented by professors and doctors.

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Tuesday February 28 - Education Conference - Advanced Stress Management Strategies for Cool-Season Turfgrasses

First of our two day long, educational classes. Held in the impressive Riviera Hotel Ballroom and delivered by Jack D. Fry, Ph.D. and Bingma Huang, Ph.D.

The objective of the day was to understand cool-season turfgrass physiology, understand physiological responses to environmental stresses and collectively impart information on how cultural practices and maintenance philosophies can influence turf quality in unlimted environments.

We were asked to interact and put forward solutions to counteract environmental stresses and then finally we discussed how fertilisation and the use of PGRs can be utilised in reducing these stresses.

The class was delivered very professionally and in great depth and there were attendees from all over the globe who could exchange ideas and gain something that was relevant to them from the lecture.

After our class we attended the GSCAA Opening Ceremony and Reception. This was a very extravagant affair, which only confirmed how proud and passionate the members are about their Association.

Bheti Roana, CEO, led the proceedings, introducing the Board of Directors and presenting various awards along with President, Bob Randquist, who was also honoured for his term as President. It was great to see and later meet David Phripps who won the “Environmental Stewardship Award”, David, a Delegate from the GSCAA, sponsored by Bernhard’s and Co., has attended BTME in the past. A drinks reception followed, before we were whisked away to a “German Theme Bar” for another reception, held by Tufurt.

Wednesday, February 29 - Thursday, March 1 - Golf Industry Show

Over the next two days, we had the opportunity to attend the Trade Show and the General Sessions at the Golf Industry Show.

The North Halls, were a sea of trade stands as far as the eye could see, ranging from small family developed companies to the likes of John Deere, Toro and Ransomes Jacobsen.

There was a noticeable amount of more natural and environmentally sustainable products and techniques on offer too! A reflection, perhaps, of the growing trend towards a more sustainable approach being embraced and adopted in the US.

The BSMA stand attracted interest from all over the globe. Sami Collins, Head of sales, was on hand to pass on information. All 10 delegates were involved in manning the stand during the two days and I am sure that we all came across in a professional manner.

On the Wednesday we were all invited to the Bernhards “After Show Reception”, at the Queen Victoria Pub. A British theme evening with bite size fish and chips, pasties and sausage rolls along with some traditional beers.

Stephen Bernhard was there to host the evening, along with many US and International customers and Industry professionals.

It was great to meet Sean Sullivan CCSG, who is so active on our own bulletin board offering advice and experience.

Friday, March 3 - Education Conference - Plant Growth Regulators for Fine Turf

Our second Class was on Plant Growth Regulators and how they affect plant physiology in order to manipulate growth charactersitic and how this can be used to produce high quality surfaces. This Session was delivered by Shahn D. Askew, Ph.D. and Erik Ervin, Ph.D. from Virginia Tech University.

Our main course the day was the key note presentation on the latest research and how to understand and utilise these regulators to the full. Dr Pete Newton, Head Greenkeeper, Rockcliffe Hall GC.

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Could’n believe the chemical reliance! On the flip side, I feel we’re about 40 years behind them in the high regard that their public holds all turf grass maintenance.

The respect that these guys enjoy is tremendous and they are so professional.

Stuart Yarwood MG, Course Manager, Lynn GC.

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Jaime Acton, Head Greenkeeper, Worlebury GC.

When I was selected to be one of the lucky ten delegates to attend the GIS show, I felt honoured and extremely proud.

It was a trip of a lifetime and has inspired me to expand my educational qualities. Spending a full week with nine other very knowledgeable guys, three of whom are MGs, was a fantastic experience and I have no doubt learned a lot from them and made a great bunch of friends. David Gray, First Assistant, Ladyburn GC.

I love everyone at work has been asking me how my ‘holiday’ was but if someone said they were going to a conference in Vegas I may have thought the same, but our agenda was full on. We also found out how well educated our American cousins are with seminar after seminar being presented by professors and doctors from across America, and not least the fantastic phenomenon that is the Las Vegas strip!”

Neil Ballingall, Course Superintendent, Fairmont-St Andrews.

Saturday March 3 - Home

Saturday we had the morning to ourselves before all ten of us were treated to a Stretch-Limo ride to the Airport in true Vegas style – a fitting way to end what was a truly amazing and extremely fulfilling trip!
Over the years Temple Golf Club has received numerous calls for advice and support from other golf clubs that have adopted, or are considering using, a more natural style of course management.

The Club is now working closely with the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust and the two bodies decided to host an evening workshop entitled, “Managing with Less”, sponsored by Symbio, which was at the end of February.

The aim was to explore the economic and environmental benefits of a sound and sympathetic course management policy, while maintaining the quality and playability of the golf course and respecting and positively contributing to the indigenous and social environment.

The workshop drew an audience of Secretary/Managers, Chairs of Green, Course Managers and greenkeepers from a wide area.

Since the early 90s, Temple has worked hard at reducing course management costs and enhancing biodiversity without compromising on the quality demanded by today’s golfer. The workshop told the “warts and all” story of the journey.

Michael Barratt, broadcaster and former advisor to the R&A Golf Course Committee, chaired the evening and welcomed the guests, which included the Club President’s wife, Strilli Oppenheimer, a world renowned environmental conservationist.

Temple’s Secretary, Keith Adderley, spoke, not without a little irony, of the problems currently facing golf clubs. He posed the question “Why do we need to manage with less?” Many clubs are suffering from reduced income, and therefore having to reduce expenditure, yet golfers have increasing expectations.

What golfers see on TV, with tournaments being played around the world in eternally summer conditions and on golf courses especially prepared for one week of