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Controlling Poa Annua on a Welsh Golf Course

Huw Morgan, last year's winner of the coveted title "Young Greenkeeper of the Year" describes how he has successfully formulated a programme of control at the Fairwood Park Golf Club at Upper Killay, Swansea.

The greens at Fairwood Park were causing a great deal of problems, particularly in winter. An analysis of the grass cover showed an 80% predominance of annual meadow grass, needing an excessive amount of fertiliser to keep them in playable condition, with an acceptable putting surface.

Detailed examination revealed a thatch layer some two to three inches deep over most of the greens, with all the in-built problems that thatch can bring.

Discussions took place with the Club Management and the Greens Committee on ideas to improve the situation and they gave me their full backing and support.

It was obvious to all that there was no instant remedy to the situation and any programme of improvement would need to take place over a prolonged period, so I planned a three year programme of intensive aeration, combining a system of hollow tining with verti-draining.

In September 1985, the greens were hollow tined to a depth of 2-3 inches and this was repeated in March the following year immediately prior to the first flush of spring growth.

In September 1986, the Verti-

drain was hired and all the greens aerated to a depth of 10-12 inches with a repeat of the operation a year later in September 1987.

During the autumn and winter months, September to March, aeration continued with a slit tiner at weekly intervals to a depth of 5 to 6 inches, combined with a light application of a sandy top dressing. This produced a remarkable improvement.

The poa annua had not only been reduced by around 50%, but the age old problems of standing puddles after heavy rain were eliminated, the putting surfaces were playable in wet weather and we went through the whole of last winter without closing the course once.

However, solving one troublesome winter difficulty then created another during the summer months.

At Fairwood Park we had no irrigation system to water the greens during the dry weather, though a system has now been installed.

Granular fertilisers were not practical without rain, so I experimented with a liquid fertiliser, spraying Farmura at monthly intervals at the start of the April growing season.



Huw Morgan

This proved highly successful until the temperatures soared to the mid 70s and then the greens began to show signs of wilting and brown patches started to appear.

Controlled irrigation would have put matters to right, but without water I began to wonder whether I had overdone the improvement to drainage, though the advantages still heavily outweighed the disadvantages.

At this point further applications of Farmura and liquid iron were given in an attempt to keep the greens correctly coloured, whilst praying for rain at the same time.

I am convinced this combination of intensive aeration, the use

of liquid fertilisers and a sparing use of water is the correct method to produce faster greens in summer as well as an acceptable putting surface in winter.

Initially, there must be a surface disturbance for a few seasons while these operations are taking place, but I was fortunate and grateful to my golf club management that they had sufficient confidence in my judgement to allow me a virtual free hand to plan improvements over a relatively long period.

I said earlier that we now have an irrigation system at Fairwood Park, this has recently been installed by Watermation, but I can assure you it is used very sparingly.

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