

End of term report: why I did what I did

COURSE REPORT 1994-1995

Since my last report in April 1994, there have been quite a few changes designed for the good of Ely City Golf Club. The following report will explain why certain tasks have been carried out:

1. Topdressing greens
2. Scarification of the greens
3. Cutting greens on a more regular basis
4. Putting a fertiliser programme into practice
5. Introducing white lining
6. Using water only when necessary
7. Hollow-coring greens

1. Topdressing greens

This is done for a number of reasons. From a golfer's point of view it is obvious that when topdressing is applied there are certain changes to the green. This is generally not popular with golfers as it makes the green appear dirty and in wet conditions balls pick up particles of dirt, but in the greenkeeper's calendar it is very important for a number of reasons:

- a. It improves the rootzone
 - b. It encourages the right grasses, ie bents and fescues
 - c. It helps to reduce the surface pH (percentage of Hydrogen)
 - d. It helps to create a true putting surface.
- Our greens are very high in pH being on

Communicating with members and committees is a big problem for some head greenkeepers. But not for Kevin Garfitt, head greenkeeper at the Henry Cotton-designed Ely City Golf Club near Cambridge. Here is a copy of his latest report. We hope it gives you some ideas. It took him a month to compile!

average 7.4-7.9% whereas an ideal figure should be in the region of 5.55-5.8%. Applying a good quality topdressing of sand, loam and peat mix over a number of years will help to reduce the pH levels and thereby encourage a healthy sward.

2. Scarification

This operation is very important for a number of reasons:

- a. To assist the removal of dead and diseased material to a depth of 3/16 of an inch.
- b. To assist with reducing alien grass species, ie annual meadow grass, (*Poa annua*), Yorkshire fog, and, in the 9th green particularly, ryegrass.
- c. It helps create a fast and true putting surface.

This operation should be carried out on a weekly basis when the greens have sufficient moisture, throughout the growing season, (April-September) and I feel that this task has not been incorporated in the work programme as it should have been over the past years.

3. Cutting greens

It may well appear to the average golfer that all greenkeepers do is "cut grass and get in the way". It may not always occur to them to consider why certain operations are taking place. The reasons why we cut greens seven days a week from May until the middle of October (at first light on Saturdays and Sundays) are as follows:

- a. Vast amounts of grass are not removed with each cut so no matter when a member plays during the week, the greens are kept at the same pace on average.
- b. It helps to encourage the spread of the finer grass species (bents and fescues) and discourages the coarser varieties.
- c. It helps to reduce fungal attack thereby reducing the need for chemicals (fungicides).

Again, I feel the greens were not cut as often as was warranted, in the past.

4. Fertiliser programme

Fertiliser is applied for a number of reasons. From a golfer's point of view it thickens the sward and puts colour into the greens. The greenkeeper applies fertiliser to improve the general quality of the turf. Knowing what balance of fertiliser to apply and at what time of the year can only come with experience. In this respect I consider the programme adopted last season was correct. A good coverage was obtained during the whole of the main playing season and this has been maintained throughout the winter with very little evidence of the common fungal diseases (*fusarium* and red thread) which are often prevalent at this time of the year.

5. White lining

I introduced white lining when I arrived. It was received with mixed feelings by the members but most could see the benefits from keeping trolleys and buggies away from the greens and thus reducing wear in these important areas.

6. Water

Watering grass areas such as greens should only be carried out when necessary and then only in sufficient quantities to maintain adequate and even growth. Excess watering will encourage disease such as *fusarium* patch and will encourage the growth of the more shallow rooting species such as annual meadow grass, Yorkshire fog etc. It is often thought that water is used mainly to soften greens and to improve the holding characteristic of the green but in fact it is used to keep the grass alive during drought conditions. Water is for the greenkeeper's use, not the golfer's.

7. Hollow coring (tining) greens

In the past, the greens have been Verti-drained and topdressed with a sand-based

mixture and this has caused a number of problems with surface compaction and in a number of greens severe "dry patch" problems. I have addressed this problem by hollow-tining the greens and leaving the holes open during the winter. This is to try to break the crust layer and to help alleviate the dry patch problem. I shall topdress the greens in the spring and repeat the hollow-tining programme next autumn. Leaving the holes open has helped to keep the greens free from standing water during this winter.

8. Additional work - winter programme

Drainage - The course drainage is in very poor condition due to roots blocking pipes and lack of annual maintenance of ditches. This was brought to the attention of the Green Committee, the members of which, I think, were not aware of the scale of the problem. A plan was formulated under the guidance of course architect Howard Swan of Golf Landscapes Ltd., the first phase of which was to clean out all the internal ditches to help the water off the land. This seems to be working very well as water is now moving freely whereas before it was completely stagnant.

9. New tees

New tees have now been constructed on the 3rd, 4th and 13th. We have made them as level as possible and to give them individual character by putting in steps on the 4th and shaping round the water on the 3rd and 13th. We tried to get all the tee tops turfed before Christmas and we have laid over 2,000 square yards of turf since the end of October to the New Year. All these areas are establishing themselves well and should be back in play around Easter.

10. Conclusion

This winter, there has been a lot of disruption due to the heavy workload we have been under and quite a lot of pressure from members regarding the banning of trolleys and buggies and the mess caused by the contractors. The damage is now mainly confined to the areas across the 14th and 16th fairways. The larger areas of damage will be either turfed or seeded as soon as we consider weather conditions to be suitable. The remainder of the course is standing up well to the winter. Once growth commences, the greens will get away to a very good start provided the present grass cover can be maintained and by protecting the important areas, ie. the tees, greens, surrounds and approaches, it will ensure the course will commence the new season in very good condition.

Finally, on behalf of the greenstaff, may I wish the Captains, Committee and all the Members a very Happy and Prosperous New Year and a good golfing season.

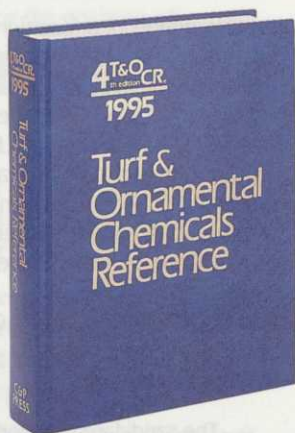
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