



Chairman's Word

National Chairman, Peter Todd, gives his thoughts for the month

The end of July marks the start of the school holidays and a reduced number of rounds, giving us about a month before play levels pick up again in September.

It is at this time of year that we like to take full advantage of the quieter golfing period to carry out more disruptive work such as greens' renovation which fits in well with the pattern of play.

Our greens' renovation consists of hollow coring, followed by linear aeration (Graden), topdressing and browntop bent grass over-seeding. During the same week hollow coring of fairways and approaches is carried out keeping this disruption happening all at the same time as greens. One course is scheduled immediately the schools' break and the other three weeks later to allow time for the first to recover.

Temperatures in August are near the peak for the year and enable rapid recovery



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of playing surfaces and fast germination of bentgrass seed. Over the past four years we have been carrying out a dwarf ryegrass over-seeding programme on fairways and roughs during August but have moved this to early October this year. Unlike 2007 and 2008 this summer has been much drier and warmer in the south east with temperatures regularly reaching the high 20s. With wanting to scarify fairways in advance of over-seeding these hot dry conditions just don't bode well for a great result, particularly with September's busier play just round the corner.

In an earlier column I mentioned throwing away my calendar when it comes to fixing work schedules, yes we have a plan, but it is not cast in stone. Timing needs to be based on when the greatest degree of success is likely considering all the factors of growing conditions, levels of play and resources available. As our reservoir levels continued to drop through June and July it was clear that scarifying fairways in summer was not an option if we were to stick to our preference for only using recycled irrigation water. Our location 500 feet above sea level in an exposed location on the North Downs is one of the driest in the country. While August usually brings about 75mm of rain the soil moisture levels have continued low throughout the summer and irrigation

quantities on fairways not high enough to replace the total level of ET. So it's a case of waiting until conditions change - hopefully by the time we get to late September.

Staff all need to take a well deserved break during the long season from April to October and with holding so many events this year, along with renovation weeks and projects, scheduling all this becomes an interesting juggling exercise. As well as The European Open in May, The Trilby Tour in July and The PGA National Assistants Championships in August our diary also includes a third televised event in October this season. August is also proving to be one of our busiest workloads with two weeks of renovation work and one of drainage installation. This doesn't leave much slack in the diary for the team to recharge their batteries so it's important to recognise all their efforts. I know we demand a lot out of the guys at these busy times. One of our key pieces is a catering sized barbeque and firing it up at these times is great way to say thank you to the team.

When deciding on priorities there are compromises to be made, often between short term presentation to satisfy today's golfers and work that is essential if you are to continue to do the same over the longer term. It is very easy to focus on today's needs and meet the short term needs of

the business, but it isn't too long before this catches up on you and a whole host of course problems build up. At some point golfers start to notice soft, thatchy playing surfaces, worn out areas with a lack of course definition and poorly conditioned bunkers etc. A regular programme of work that deals with these issues little and often can be far easier to fit into both the diary and budget, than large scale disruption.

In this highly competitive golf market a long slow deterioration in quality will only lead to a gradual decline in revenue, worst still, having to close holes or a course for extended periods of time in the future is far more costly to the business. It is our job to continue to get that message across to club secretaries, general managers, committees, members, visitors and owners. Communication in writing, by e-mail, displayed on club websites and notice boards, whatever is appropriate is key to making sure your recommendations and information are on record and understood. Working with your club's decision makers to reach that necessary compromise and agree a work programme that fits in with the business will help to improve the course and its long term health.

Peter Todd
National Chairman