



1832

NORTH BERWICK WEST LINKS

Course Report – February

Course Conditions

Despite a fairly mild end to January (and some beautiful sunny days) and beginning of February, we are still experiencing low overnight temperatures and low soil temperatures which is not uncommon for this time of year. With this comes very minimal growth and recovery. It has also been a very dry start to the year with only 30mm of rain so far this year, 3.2mm in February so far. Coupled with a good drying wind, there is quite a bit of leaf desiccation evident. With this, we will look to commission our Irrigation system earlier than normal to try and keep ahead of the curve and apply irrigation where required. If we do end up with another cold snap, we will drain the system down to avoid burst pipes or cracked sprinklers.



Figure 1: The 1st green taken on the 10th of February. The yellow, straw like colours of the desiccated leaves is evident.

March Maintenance Week

I have written a brief report about the planned works for the March Maintenance week. We will be Dry-Jecting the greens with Ken Siems coming in with 3 Dry-Jects. In conjunction with this we will solid tine the greens with a 10mm tine at a depth of 4 inches.

We don't want to be too invasive during the March Maintenance week as with low soil temperature and no consistent growth till late April/May, the recovery period would be far too long and unnecessary. We have another Maintenance window in September. The works undertaken then will be dictated by the annual Organic Matter and Golf Green Health Indexing (GGHI) testing and will be more invasive if required to bring down the Organic

Matter down to the desired levels. With warmer soil temperatures and warmer daily average temperatures, recovery will be a lot quicker.



Figure 2: Example of the greens surface following solid tine and Dry-Ject

17th Bunker

As of the 9th of Feb, the revetted wall shape was finally tied together and there are just some more layers of revetting to lay and the final chamfering/tying in of the top layer to go before we can start laying the surround turf.

We have installed bunker sand to 2 thirds of the bunker. We did this to show the members how the bunker will look once it's finished, how the bunker will look/play, but also to make use of the ramp that was built to drive tractors and buggies into the bunker. We took the ramp out on the 7th of February which allowed us to form the final shape and tie in the revetted wall.



Figure 3: Sand being installed in the bunker.



Figure 4: Luis and Rick laying a line of revetted turf.

The team have really embraced this challenge and now have a better understanding of how to build revetted bunkers which will stand them in good stead for future rebuilds.

Staff Training

In the last few weeks, 3 of the team have started studying towards a SVQ Level 2 in Sportsturf Maintenance through Elmwood College. We are delighted they have been able to make a start on this course and will support them fully on their journey.

As we head into the new season, it is going to be vitally important that we train our team to be able to undertake most tasks out on the course. We have started training on the sprayer with Alex and Gavin spending time getting used to the Toro 5800 spraying Fairways and Greens. We will also this week be training on how to use the Topdresser, how to do a Spring start up on the irrigation system, changing holes and refreshing them on how to do tasks on the course. We are only as strong as our weakest link so it is so important that we have flexibility in the team to cover most tasks and provide training where required.

Winter to Full Course Transition

The Burn's Shield on the 4th of March indicates the start of the main playing season for all clubs and with that brings a return to the full course. On Monday 27th of February, mats will no longer be required and the Tees will return to their normal positions.

We would like to thank all the members for using the mats through the winter months which has helped to let landing zones on fairways recover. We are lucky that we can offer golf all through the year, but even just a few months without excessive divots being taken can help to create better playing surfaces.

The bunkers that have been rebuilt (5, 12, and 17) will remain Ground Under Repair (GUR) until they turf on the surround has rooted and established. We still have a few small turfing jobs that will be roped or hooped off so we ask all golfers to be mindful of these around the course.

It was mentioned at the start of the winter course set-up that the condition of the winter tees on 4,6,10 and 15 were below the standards expected so we will make a conscious effort this year to improve the standards for next winter which will include increased nutrition, aeration, seeding, topdressing and irrigation.

Hot Topic – Wetting Agent on Fairways

We are very lucky to have a sandy profile across the site that drains rainwater well and is conducive to true links playing conditions, but with a sandy profile comes a struggle to retain moisture and nutrients in the profile. We are also fortunate to have a full irrigation system that covers greens, tee, approaches, fairways and some walkways, although the water source and configuration of the sprinklers require some updating.

During the winter months, we try to retain as much moisture in the profile with the use of wetting agents. Wetting agents have become a valuable turf management tool and can be used for a number of reasons – retain moisture, penetrate the surface, re-wet dry spots. The idea is that during the autumn/winter months, there should be more rainfall. By applying a wetting agent, the profile will harness the moisture and will re-wet after prolonged dry periods. We are aiming to give ourselves a head start in the Spring, especially if it is a cold and dry spring by giving the turf roots available moisture to keep it healthy and promote growth and recovery.

We also apply some Nitrogen (Ammonium Sulphate) to give the turf a boost of nutrition as well as Iron to harden the plants cell walls and some seaweed which is a natural bio-stimulant. Instead of waiting for the warmer weather to kick in to give the plants everything it needs to start growing (photosynthesizing), we are trying to give it an early season boost.

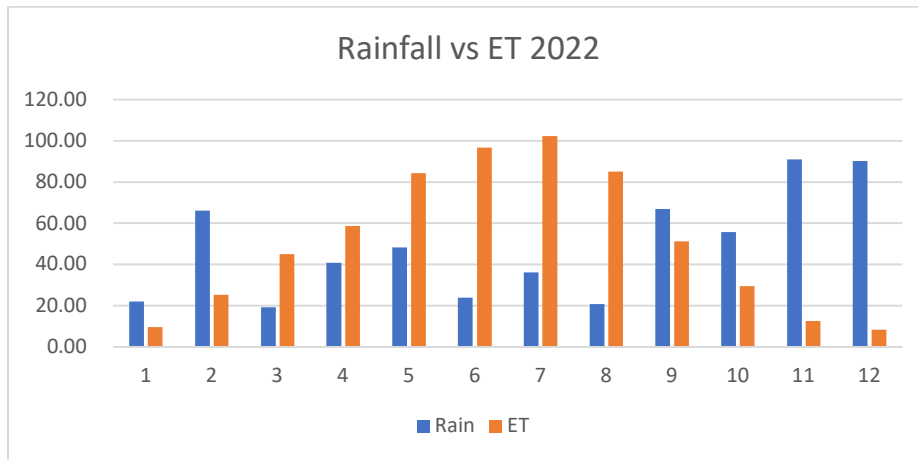


Figure : The high rainfall in the winter months is a lot higher than in the summer, whereas the ET rates are a lot higher in the summer.

We also have to be mindful of the deficit of ET (Evapotranspiration - loss of soil moisture through evaporation) and rainfall. This is also the reason why we are doing our spring start-up of the irrigation system early this year as if we are hit with a cold, dry spring, we will have to apply water to playing surfaces as well as turf areas to stop them becoming too dry and hydrophobic.

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Course Manager