



Making great sport happen



Rosslare Golf Club

Report on the Agronomic Condition of the Golf Course

Report Date: 30th October 2020
Consultant: Dr Ian McClements



Date of Visit: Friday 23rd October 2020

Visit Objective: To review current conditions whilst discussing management strategies for the autumn to winter period.

Present: Mr Boyd Scott – Green Convenor
Mr Jim Cullimore
Mr Niall McGuinness
Mr Iain Wakeman – Course Superintendent
Dr Ian McClements – STRI Ltd

Weather: Dry and sunny.

Headlines

- The putting surfaces supported a dense grass cover dominated by desirable species, forming a good basis upon which to enter the winter playing season.
- Consistency between greens is much improved on my July visit, it is desired to sustain this through the autumn to spring period.
- Top dressing applications have been sustained throughout the season (reportedly on a three-weekly basis) and visually the upper profiles appear well diluted with no apparent increase in organic matter.
- Rooting to depth was also noted as being excellent.
- Visual surface blemishes could be attributed to fresh pitch marking damage and an occasional broadleaved weed.
- The uniformity of greens collars and aprons is much improved, yet the desire to improve these surfaces botanically remains. The ultimate objective is to reduce the meadowgrass content to create surfaces that are more in keeping with the links greens.
- Coarse textured patches of ryegrass should be dealt with through graminicide application in 2021 but consideration should be given to stripping out and resodding those sections most heavily contaminated that don't possess an understory of fine grasses.
- Fairways are much improved, but with more work to do to realise and achieve the desired standard. Despite overnight rain sandy seaward fairways still had a low moisture content (15-18%) at the time of the visit.
- Rough management had commenced with the Club's Wiedenmann Super 500 but this trailed unit is incapable of tackling some of the more severe undulations and contouring prevalent within several green complexes where thinning of the rough is desired.
- Goat willow was noted as being prevalent close to lines of play, whilst this exists as part of the site vegetation mosaic it does warrant control and removal where it is located within the immediate fringing rough.
- With the golf course set to close for 6 weeks, the opportunity to be taken to divot repair tees and fairways and then to consider the introduction of mats when golf returns.

Key Actions

- Continue the top-dressing programme to greens for as long as there is active growth.
- Brush periodically over the winter to keep the bentgrass refined.
- Adjust perimeter contouring on the 6th green to ease the sharpness of the front perimeter.
- Assess green complexes on an individual basis to determine an appropriate strategy for botanical improvement.
- Divot tees and fairways to take full advantage of the enforced closure to play.
- Plan to top dress the sandy fairways with a finely screened compost or seaweed meal.
- Wetting agent applications to the sandy fairways is critical to the management of moisture on this site.

Photo Observations and Comments



Figure 1: Green surfaces are dominated by desirable links grasses.



Figure 2: Root function is generally excellent, and profiles are nicely diluted



Figure 3: The surround had been extended at the 8th to develop a close mown run off.



Figure 4: The new turf on the right-hand side of the 3rd green has supported traffic well over the main playing season.



Figure 5: Clumpy ryegrass destroys the beauty of links golf for putting or chipping from the fringes.



Figure 6: At the 15th green complex, ryegrass extends in to the adjacent rough.

Photo Observations and Comments (continued)



Figure 7: Remodelling and controlling traffic around the 14th green complex was discussed.



Figure 8: Gorse regeneration at the 2nd maintains this species in a building phase and should be extended to other areas of gorse on the course.



Figure 9: Encroaching bracken on the 18th fairway should be pushed back further from the main lines of play.



Figure 10: Goat willow was also noted as encroaching through what should be fringing rough.



Figure 11: Lines of new seed were evident in many thinner fairways.

Recommendations

Greens

- Continue to top dress the putting surfaces for as long as there is active growth to continue the process of organic matter dilution and to minimise the risk of build-up.
- Keep the sward cover hardened off against winter disease activity with regular dressings of iron over the autumn to spring period. Include a little ammonia (5-10kg/ha) to keep the surfaces ticking over if circumstances dictate that it is necessary, pay particular attention to sandier profiles such as the 7th which may run out of steam a little quicker than other greens.
- Open the profiles to depth with the Verti-Drain which is regarded as the most effective mechanism for loosening profiles uniformly and evenly to depth. This will also help to fracture the underlying soils to encourage water penetration and rooting.
- Aim to spread wear and tear around the greens through the winter months to minimise the potential for localised thinning or weakening. Use higher, drier areas which are inaccessible through the summer months to protect wetter, low lying sections from traffic and consolidation.
- Periodically brush the surfaces over the winter months to stand up any leafy bentgrass into the path of the cutting units ahead of mowing. This will help to ensure that the bentgrass remains refined over the winter and to avoid any deterioration in texture come next spring.
- Recontour the front and right-hand side of the 6th green to soften the sharp contouring at the front of the green. This will require supplementary top dressing before mowing can be reduced to the summer setting of the putting surface.

Green Surrounds and Approaches

- The quality of the collars and aprons has improved significantly since my July visit, yet the annual meadow grass content remains higher than desired on many and the need for ongoing seeding (two to three occasions) is again highlighted for budgetary purposes in 2021. A reduction in meadowgrass content will help to perfect surfaces that are more in keeping with the greens both botanically and in terms of how they interact for approach play.
- Coarse textured ryegrass is prevalent in many collars and aprons and each hole should be evaluated to determine an appropriate strategy going forward. It is proposed that a combination of approaches is likely, use the graminicide Stratos Ultra where occasional crowns of ryegrass are prevalent and thinning because of its removal can be corrected through overseeding. Where dense patches of ryegrass are prevalent e.g. left-hand side of the 15th, it would be preferable to strip out the ryegrass which can be replaced with imported sod.
- Rerouting traffic over the autumn to spring period when growth tails off will be important to protect vulnerable areas from weakening or thinning, for example the new turf on the right hand side of the 3rd green complex or the narrow traffic routes around the 14th or 12th.
- It would be desirable to remove most or all the unsightly roping that is prevalent around the golf course particularly the ropes through the approach and along the left-hand edge to the 14th green complex. It might be possible to achieve this with subtle reshaping of the mounding through the green approach to restrict this route to bag carriers by extending the mounding from the left across to the right to keep golfers and more importantly buggies on the existing path. The path edge should be sleepered so that buggies cannot run up onto the green approach/surround and the path width reduced in size to the rear left-hand corner of the green complex. Signage, whilst beneficial, does not guarantee 100% success whereas physical barriers sympathetic to the links environment are likely to be more effective.

Fairways

- The fairways have responded favourably to the recent input of liquid nutrient, but make provision to top up the sandier profiles with a further application and contemplate the use of sulphate of ammonia and sulphate of iron over the autumn to spring period on a couple of occasions to support seeding growth and establishment.
- Results from the recent oversowing were generally good and overall, there is encouraging signs of finer grasses establishing on previously weak sections and fairways overall where annual meadow grass was more prevalent. This is heartening but it does highlight the importance in maintaining the overseeding work in future years. Ideally if there were no financial constraints the fairways would receive a double pass with the Vredo in August/September with a further dimple seeding 3 – 4 weeks later.
- Moisture content on the sandier seaward fairways was between 15-18% which is towards the lower end of our optimal range despite overnight rain and recent showery conditions.
- Top dressing the sandiest fairways with either compost or seaweed meal should be budgeted for to help build up more body to the profile and its resilience to dry conditions.
- To ensure that the surfaces and profiles are receptive to moisture whether it occurs naturally through rainfall or supplied through the irrigation system a wetting agent programme is regarded as being necessary and here we would advocate applications on a year-round basis.

Roughs

- A rough management programme had commenced with the Wiedenmann Super 500 thinning out rank pockets of heavier grassland, for example around the 2nd green complex and to the left hand side of the 3rd. Whilst the Wiedenmann can cope admirably with flatter and relatively smooth contours it cannot travel over the more intricate and steeper terrain that is to be found on some sections of the rough at Rosslare, for example on the right hand side of the 13th. The only machine that can really cater for these more undulating sections is the Profihopper which would allow you to cut or scarify and collect in a single pass.
- The aim of rough management is to develop thin wispy fringing rough beyond your mown semi, which allows for ball retrieval but creates a penalty for a wayward shot. Fringing rough is developed through a process of close mowing, clipping removal, scarification and debris removal. This programme of work would be instigated in the autumn period with regrowth allowed to occur over the winter and into the subsequent growing season. Goat willow which is an indigenous species is found to be close to some lines of play within what should be fringing rough and here this should be removed, a selective herbicide will be required to kill pockets of the willow before cutting/scarification. Use a product that is approved for woody weed control e.g. Garlon or similar approved.

Resources

- It was pleasing to note that the Club have invested financially in the course with overseeding of fairways to deliver improvements which have been realised since my last visit.
- Given the need for further seeding, it would be economically appropriate to invest the money set aside for hiring a Stitch seeder to acquire your own unit which could be used as and when weather conditions and work programmes allow.
- The Club should also look to upgrade the Wiedenmann Super 500 to a Profihopper which would extend the rough management programme to some of the more severe undulating sections of the course to improve playability.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ian McClements". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Ian McClements BSc, PhD, MBPR
Senior Consultant
Email: ian.mcclements@stri.co.uk