

BALTINGLASS GOLF CLUB

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SITE VISIT: **20 March 2009**

PRESENT: **Mr. Matt O'Brien, President**
Mr. Michael Quinn, Captain
Mr. Robert McHugh, Vice Captain
Mr. Paddy Salmon, Treasurer
Mr. Martin Donegan, Head Greenkeeper
Mr. Eddie Connaughton, Agronomist.

GENERAL INSPECTION OF THE COURSE:

Greens:

The greens at Baltinglass are broken down separately into old greens which are primarily soil based with meadowgrass dominated on top and new greens which are sand based and have a mix of fine leaved meadowgrass and bentgrass.

New Greens:

All of these greens are in very good condition with a good cover of grass everywhere throughout all the surfaces. There are a few small areas where some die-back is occurring but nothing of any consequence. The profiles were

examined and they all looked quite good, root development is down through the top 3 inches and there is very little in the way of thatch present. However, due to last year being very wet there is very little sand present in the immediate top of the greens indicating the amount of topdressing carried out was not up to the desired levels. This in turn would have resulted in the surfaces being slightly soft and needs to be addressed this year with a light dressing of sand applied every two weeks throughout the main playing season along with verti-cutting during the growing season. There should be no problem then in maintaining a good cover of grass and good surfaces on the greens.

The main issue of concern by the committee is the lack of pace and speed on the greens throughout the main growing season. At present the pace is quite good because they have not yet started to grow fully and there is a good roll over the greens. However, as they are being maintained at 3mm height of cut, the pace should be desirable once the topdressings are carried out. The fertilising programme on these greens is quite heavily dominated with granular feeds and we should look at this to ensure there is not too much growth. We should introduce liquid feeding from May on the newer greens and start using Primo Maxx as a method of getting better pace on the greens during the main growing season. Otherwise, micro-tining, topdressing and fertilising with 4-2-8 can be started as soon as possible in the next few weeks. Thereafter the normal programme of

liquid feeding every 3-4 weeks with the Primo Maxx included from May on, topdressing twice monthly with verti-cutting weekly until the summer season arrives and then twice per month would be more than adequate so that the greens are not thinned out too much.

Old Greens:

There is a problem here as these greens suffered a severe attack of Fusarium last autumn. The 1st, 11th, 12th & 13th all had severe damage throughout the surfaces which was not contained in time and scars have remained for the winter season. Fusarium disease is devastating in late autumn /early winter and a full preventative fungicide programme is necessary to reduce the risk of infection. However, that does not guarantee attacks will not occur and early detection and immediate spraying with a contact fungicide like Chipco is critical. It is odd that while all the greens at your course had been treated preventatively, only the older greens were damaged as there was no sign of Fusarium on the newer greens. The cause of this may be due to the fact that the older greens were in weakened state going into the winter months and thus were more susceptible to the Fusarium attack.

It was reported by Martin that the depth of verti-cutting last summer may have weakened the grass in the older greens thus the reduction in grass density going into the winter months. It would therefore be important this year to reduce the

verti-cutting to only twice per month during the summer months with the blades set to only remove surface lateral growth. As Fusarium is only a leaf disease these greens will recover over the month of April with an adjusted programme along with full spring growth. During April it will be important to “nurse” these greens back to full health, therefore cutting heights will have to remain high and slow greens with some uneven surfaces will have to be tolerated. Any more stress on these greens could result in poor greens later in the season. Therefore, give them the time to recover during April in order to achieve good greens from May on.

MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMES REQUIRED:

- Micro-solid tine week commencing 23 March to create a porous surface and break up some of the algae that was on the surface of some greens (i.e. 1st).
- Lightly topdress with sand and overseed with bentgrass the weaker portions of the greens and brush in to all the surfaces.
- Fertilise with the 14-2-8 at 30gr/ m² after all the above is completed and wash thoroughly into all the surfaces. A further application of 14-2-8 will be necessary after Easter to encourage the growth back into the greens.
- Apply a chipco fungicide at 1.5 litres / green as a preventative spray for any new disease that may occur after the first 14-2-8 is applied.

- Maintain the height of cut at winter level until the growth starts to recover and only gradually lower to 3.5mm for the end of April with the summer cut of 3mm commencing when the greens are fully recovered.
- Schedule two light (0.5kilos/m²) sand topdressings during April to smooth the putting surfaces.
- The new greens can be managed in April as described earlier in report.

SUMMER MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMES FOR ALL GREENS:

Assuming that full growth has returned to the old greens by May, the following management practices, which are in line with the programme that worked well last year, can be carried out:

- The fertility programme should be liquid based from the start of May with the soluble 13-0-45, pro-turf, N-Sure and Primo Maxx applied at recommended rates on a 3-4 week cycle through the summer months. A slow release granular Headland 13-3-13 should be applied mid-July at 25gr/m² to avoid die-back occurring in August.
- After initial early season verti-cutting, a twice monthly treatment in association with topdressing should be scheduled from mid-May to September.

- Wetting agents should be commenced mid-April and applied monthly at label recommended rates for the season.
- Cutting heights should be maintained at 3mm for the summer months to achieve the necessary pace with turf ironing supplementing the cutting during periods of heavy growth.
- Diseases should be sprayed as they occur with systemic fungicides during the summer but contact should be used from October- January.
- Water only as necessary during dry weather and keep high areas hand watered in drought conditions.

Green Surrounds & Fairways:

All these areas looked quite good, the new nine have been fertilised with the Humber Palmer and should be fertilised again at least twice during the season to ensure good cover of grass and growth on all the fairway and mounding areas. It is very important that the tees are fertilised frequently at least once every 6 weeks with a granular feed like Humber Palmer and then topdressed monthly to maintain good surface levels. It would also be well worthwhile on the tees, especially with divot boxes on par 3s, to mix in 50% organic matter or 20% soil with sand and seed to help re-growth in those areas.

The main issue to be addressed on the new nine is the drainage of the 7th fairway in particular as well as the 10th. Both areas are causing regular closure of the golf course and they should be drained. The work carried out on the 8th hole has proved that this type of drainage will make the wet areas playable. Using a local contractor, collector drains can be installed along the right side of the 7th linking back to the large manhole section, with a couple of “spurs” put in around the upper side of the ladies tee. Thereafter, the specialist whizz-wheel work can be used for the laterals and slits. The wet area near the bunkers short and left of the 8th green and the full right side of the 10th could also have collectors installed ahead of laterals and slits. The top of some new drains on the 8th should be covered with a sand/ soil mix with seed to help them grow grass this season.

Finally, it is very important that the areas drained (i.e. 8th) and green surrounds of new greens be topdressed with Darcy sand at a rate of 40 tonne/ acre so that the surface does not seal over and reduce the effectiveness of the new drainage. Also, the sand topdressing around the new greens will ensure they remain dry during the winter months.

Presentation of the Course

The general presentation of the course for this time of the year was excellent and it is important that this is sustained during the playing season to ensure that members and visitors enjoy the full benefits of the facility. Housekeeping and general

maintenance form an integral in ensuring that the course is kept to the best possible standard.

**Eddie B. Connaughton, B. Sc.
Agronomist.**