

**Spoke too soon!!**

In my last report I spoke of improving conditions just as the heavy rain came again. Last winter was the wettest since 1960, a 62-year gap between such wet winters and this winter is now already wetter than last. From the beginning of September 2022 through until the end of February 2023 we had 436mm of rainfall. Already this winter since the beginning of September we have had 476mm. And its only the 14<sup>th</sup> December as I write. It is very frustrating for everyone involved that we have no choice but to restrict play and also for the greenkeeping team who cannot access the course to carry planned winter maintenance which improves our course during the summer months.

2023	74	7	112	84	33	81	131	61	103	198	66	109	1059
2022	34	78	52	19	56	36	26	36	59	101	144	51	692
Annual Averages 1991-2020	59	49	45	47	49	66	65	63	57	71	69	69	709

**In July we had 131mm of rain but the course never closed then, why?**

It’s a good question and explained by the drying process what we call evapotranspiration. This has multiple factors; wind, temperature, hours of daylight/sunshine, humidity, solar radiation, and plant growth, all of which with the exception of wind and humidity are higher during the summer months. But a low humidity wind will dry quickly in summer and a high humidity wind as is typical in the winter does less so. But apart from weather its plant growth that has the biggest impact.

Much of the moisture which causes playing restrictions is trapped in the ground, not sitting on the surface. Our soils are saturated due to high water table, poor subsoil drainage (Clay soils) but also the ability for the water to evaporate. During summer months when the grass plant is growing strong, the plant roots draw water from the soil through osmotic process, carrying the nutrients it needs to feed upon and releases the excess moisture through its leaves into the atmosphere. During the winter most grass plants become dormant or growth rates slow to a minimum therefore this process of moving moisture from the soil into the atmosphere stops or reduces to a trickle.

**Solutions**

The addition of drainage to areas of the golf course would help in moving surface water but doesn’t solve the issue of heavy saturated soils. Only the amelioration of coarse sand to the soil profile, as we do with the greens regular top dressing, create a freer more open soil structure. This would also add greater stability to the soil profile meaning less movement under foot which destroys soil structure and we end up with mud. Sand will also improve soil’s ability to support healthy plant growth and its natural dilution of organic material (Thatch) and abrasive nature will the deter the worms from casting at the surface. Worm casting is the other issue we suffer during the wet conditions as the texture tends to be quite slimy and they smear across the surface killing grass or collectively create a layer of mud on the surface.

Neither solution is cheap and decisions will need to made in coming seasons if we feel these weather conditions are going to become the norm year in year out. The installation of any new drainage

would need to be done during the summer months which would disturb play during the main playing season. The dressing of coarse sand to all areas of the course would be an expensive addition to our annual maintenance costs of the golf course. Neither would be an instant fix but we will be aiming to improve all these things along with all other aspects of the golf course year on year.

### **Outlook for the coming week**

We now have forecast some dryer days which will hopefully allow us to bring the course back into play. Assessments are carried out daily of the entire course and updates sent out via the V1 club system, BRS and email. Efforts this winter have been made to open those parts of the course which dry quicker than others. As I have explained here in this report the drying process is slow at this time of year so it is expected a number of days dry weather will be required for play to resume. Please always check for club updates before leaving home to avoid any disappointment.

### **Below images from the past week**







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