

2023 Review

I think its fair to say weather has dominated over the last 12 months. Reports reckon globally this will be the mildest year in 125'000 years. For the UK, certainly one of the wettest since records began and interestingly of the 10 warmest years on record, 2023 is the wettest. Conditions such as this produce strong growing conditions but also ideal for disease. Considering the challenges of the past 12 months we can take pride in the consistent playing conditions we have been able to present and the control of disease. As I write the greens remain relative clean of disease, certainly much improved on last winter's situation and we have managed this without one single chemical fungicide application.

As we continue to improve the agronomic qualities of the playing surfaces, we should see gradual improvement to playing standards across the course. These are things we can affect using existing budgets and resources. It is clear other aspects will need significant investment and additional resources to achieve, such as drainage, irrigation, bunkers, tees or design elements.

We have finally taken delivery of the new machinery ordered 18 months ago. Along with the new grinding equipment delivered end 2022, this should allow us to work more efficiently and add to the course improvements in 2024. Without a crystal ball it is impossible for us to foresee what weather challenges 2024 will present, all we can do it prepare as best we can and hope for a more average year.

Certain planned projects have been delayed due to external factors. The new irrigation planned for this winter has been delayed due to financial constraints. The planned bunker work was delayed due to the wet summer producing growth I've not seen before. Our team has been stretched to its limits throughout the summer trying to keep on top of it. Nearly all our resources needed just to cut grass. As a rule of thumb, we would normally aim for no more than 50% of resources invested in mowing, The rest on agronomic work, detailing, developments etc. As one example; during the dry summer of 2022 we cut the grass between the trees twice. In 2023 this needed to be done every 2 weeks as a minimum and this work requires one Greenkeeper 3 days to complete. On top of this we were still waiting on the new machinery and battling to keep the old kit running. In 30 plus years of doing this job I have not experienced a more challenging year and need to give huge thanks to the greenkeeping team for their dedication, attitude and efforts over the last 12 months.

2024

Looking forward, certainly the bunkers are a priority in the new year as and when the conditions and budgets allow. Not just the old bunkers waiting to be filled in but all the bunker edges need attention and after the flooding this autumn/winter, all the sand has become contaminated with debris and sludge. Most of this will need to be removed and fresh sand added.

Paths are also a priority, the gravel construction in these conditions is not fit for purpose and a long-term solution needs to be found. This also requires investment of both time and money.

Tree cutting/thinning and additional planting. This year we engaged the services of Bob Taylor, leading ecologist in the Golf Industry to produce a full review of our facility. This plan includes woodland, grassland, wetland and wildlife habitat development. Again, like everything this is resource dependant but we would hope to begin some of this work in 2024. But this plan is a rolling 5-year plan. Like all of what we do there is no end goal only continual development.

Our main goal though has to be the continued development of the playing surfaces. Improving the soil profile, fine grass species and playing qualities. We thank all of those members for their positive feedback on the course standards attained throughout this year but this is intended to only be the start. With the continued support of the existing membership and hopefully extended growth, we will be given the resources needed to achieve our goals.

On behalf of the Greenkeeping Team may I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a drier New Year!!

Ryun Holden

Course Manager