

How we care for our course

We would like to welcome our members and their guests to one of the most played golf courses in the Hawkes Bay for another great year. We look forward to improving our maintenance practices to ensure that you receive the best playing conditions available.

Our staff of 4 well-trained and enthusiastic individuals will improve the playability of all areas of the course beyond the high standards you have come to expect.

Maintenance Practices

Although it is not the Greens staff's intention to disrupt play, it is unfortunately unavoidable at times do to the total volume of rounds and unpredictable weather conditions.

The time, effort, and money put into maintaining the golf course are soon wasted unless our maintenance program is well established and implemented. This program must have an adequate budget and competent people using the proper equipment and materials.

While appearance is important, a golf course is most accurately evaluated on the durability of its playing surface, especially its greens. Putting greens make or break a golf course's reputation.

To ensure that we continue to achieve the high standard that our members have come to expect , we have formulated certain practices that are fairly rigid, but still allow us the flexibility to address specific problems as they occur.

Topdressing, aeration, verti-draining and rolling (once purchase) are ongoing maintenance practices that are necessary but most likely to disrupt play. Other, less intrusive practices, includes: fertilization, mowing, irrigation, preventative fungicide spraying and over seeding. This should help clarify some of your questions as to why we do certain cultural practices.

Topdressing

Topdressing is the application of a thin layer of sand to a turf grass area. Topdressing plays a number of important functions:

- Smoothing the playing surface: Light & frequent topdressing are used to fill in ball marks and other injured areas to improve ball-roll trueness and improve putting speed.
- Thatch control: Topdressing significantly improves the effectiveness of mechanical thatch control practices. It should not be used extensively for thatch control as it buries the thatch within the root zone to cause layering and water infiltration problems.
- Modifying the root zone: to improve mechanical strength, soil aeration porosity and drainage. Heavy Soils are susceptible to compaction and this is especially so when the soil has recently received rain or irrigation water. Sand provides mechanical strength to enable a soil to resist compaction stress.
- Controlling weeds: reducing grass weeds such as Onehunga weed (prickles). Most weeds in turf require light for germination. A thin layer of topdressing markedly reduces seed germination.

Method of Topdressing: Napier will be using two methods of topdressing this year;

- The first method will see us using our conventional method of applying a heavy sand layer over a cored green then matted-in with a drag matt. This will be in March.
- The second method will apply a light and frequent sand topdressing every three weeks. We will be using our topdressing unit that works with our Workman utility vehicle. It spreads a thin sand layer (up to 5' wide) by means of a rotary drop belt. This will allow us to minimize our time on the green. Two passes of the drag brush will then follow to incorporate the sand into the surface, thus less inconvenience to play

Aeration

Turf grass areas, especially putting greens, are designed to sustain heavy traffic. The biggest problem resulting from traffic on fine-textured soils is compaction. The most predominant visual effects due to heavy traffic are turf grass wear and removal of turf divots. The critical damage however is hidden at or below ground level. The effects of compaction on the turf grass plant include: poor drainage, decreased plant root growth, decreased water storage capacity of the soil and poor air/water balance in the soil.

- Core aeration is one of the most effective cultivation practices used to reduce both thatch and compaction, thereby improving drainage. Napier will do one hollow tine coring in March this season plus solid tining when possible on the putting greens. By a process of hollow metal tines mounted in a vertical manner, a core of soil is removed from the turf. After it has had time to dry, the core is removed from the surface using a collection system attachment mounted onto our Workman utility vehicle. The removal of the core helps loosen the soil in the vicinity of the core and improves root growth. It is at this time heavy topdressing would be applied.
- Slicing is a procedure whereby the turf is penetrated to a depth of 3-4 inches by a series of V - shaped knives attached to a fixed rotating axle usually pulled behind a utility vehicle. Slicing results in a downward and/or sideward movement of the soil leaving slits in its tracks. These slits provide a vertical shaft promoting filtration of water and allowing air to penetrate the root system. Slicing differs from coring in that no turf is removed during this procedure. The result is less disruption on the playing surface.
- Deep-Tine Aerification is a process in which solid core tines are mounted in a vertical manner attached to the rear of a tractor. We use a verti-drain machine for deep tine aerification. They can achieve depths of up to 10 inches. At Napier, this method is used in March on our old soil greens to alleviate the problem of subsurface compaction and to penetrate the layers that have developed over time.

Verti-Cutting

The primary mechanical means of thatch control is controlled through vertical mowing. We use two methods of verti-cutting in our maintenance practices.

- Groomers or vertical reels are mounted on our Greens mowers. This provides a light vertical mowing or tickle action. Groomers are used to lift the leaf blade that is lying down and is not being mowed. The result is limited thatch removal and truer rolling greens with minimal disruption to play; this is done weekly over the summer period.

- Self Propelled Units are better suited for greens. They are vertical blades mounted on a rotating axle that turns at high revolutions. These units are more labour intensive and disruptive to play however, they do provide the necessary penetration (one quarter inch to one half inch) to remove significant thatch from the crown and upper root zone area. The knives provide a means for the canopy and crown area to receive the incorporation of topdressing sands. This type of verti-draining will be highly desirable in the case of our Poa Annua greens that are being mowed tighter and create more organic materia

Rolling (once purchased)

We use our greens roller as required within our maintenance routine. This is a dedicated machine with drum rollers. The benefits for Napier are:

- Increased green speed under usual mowing heights
- Smooth ball marks
- Remove early mowing dew
- Improve post-aerification putting quality
- Tighten thatch layer increases the durability of the green

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