



CLUB SUPPORT COURSE REPORT

PRESENTED TO MARRICKVILLE GOLF CLUB

FEBRUARY 13TH, 2023

PREPARED BY MARTYN BLACK



GOLF NSW CLUB SUPPORT PARTNERS



PROJECT OVERVIEW MARRICKVILLE GOLF CLUB
COURSE REPORT
MONDAY 13TH FEBRUARY 2023

IN ATTENDANCE Andrew Tighe – President
Dane Jones – Captain
Alan Willding – Chair of Greens
Nathan Lindsay – Course Superintendent
Kylie Moulds – Professional
Martyn Black – Head Agronomist Golf NSW

INTRODUCTION Inspection of Putting Surfaces, to ascertain any underlying conditions that may have contributed to substantial turf loss of those greens which are primarily comprised of Bent / Poa annua.

Then to consider options for remedial action, both short and long term.

OBSERVATIONS & CONSIDERATIONS

1. Course Superintendent Nathan Lindsay used a soil sampling device on several greens which revealed a serious issue with 'BLACK LAYER'; this is a phenomenon caused by anaerobic conditions i.e.: not sufficient oxygen in the soil.

Black Layer will help produce Hydrogen Sulphide "*rotten egg gas*" which is toxic to turf.

This scenario is exacerbated by the fact that the greens at Marrickville are constructed using what is know as the 'push up' method, this means there is no sub-surface drainage system and surface drainage is the main means by which excess water is "shed" from the putting surface.

This inferior construction method would probably be particularly problematic in that it not only holds water but the soil/sand mix in some sections of the green is not of sufficient depth to allow the cutting of a new hole.

- It is understood the club is waiting for the results of a laboratory test on samples taken from the greens recently; and with the above combination of limiting/debilitating factors being at play on most greens, it would not be surprising to find the fungal pathogens that combine to cause a disease which is commonly referred to as 'Summer Decline'.
- This is where Pythium and Rhizoctonia combine to attack the tissue of the Bent/Poa plants which are already under the normal summer stresses of heat, humidity and the short root systems that are typical of all '*cool season grasses*' at this time of year. Therefore, a summary of underlying factors would read;
 - Black Layer (insufficient oxygen)

- Excessive thatch
- Layering of the soil profile
- Shortened root systems
- Poor drainage
- Difficult to control disease (particularly PYTHIUM)

2. Couch Vs Bent/Poa

a) Bent/Poa

- The vast majority of golf clubs in the Sydney region play on Bent/Poa putting surfaces.
- Some 'high end' clubs with very good resources both financially and staff numbers are able to present Poa free surfaces i.e.: pure Bentgrass greens.
- However at clubs with fewer resources, Poa annua tends to dominate the sward over time and as the botanical name suggests it is basically an "Annual" plant, and as such does not tolerate the 3 months of the year where temperatures rise above 25°C.
- Much time and money is spent at clubs to get the Poa dominant greens through these "tough times", and that is even if they are not having to endure the aforementioned underlying factors.

b) Couch

- On the day of my visit it was a revelation, as to how much good Couch grass had not only survived the conditions that had led to the loss of large areas of Bent/Poa ; but had indeed thrived.
- I was pleased to hear that the club had already been discussing the benefits of converting the putting surfaces to Couch in the future.
- The 3rd green was already virtually 100% couch which is believed to be a variety known as "328", and has been used in Australia for several decades and became the "hybrid" Couch from the USA that revolutionised putting surfaces in Qld as it quickly became a great alternative to "Qld Blue Couch".
- Digitaria didactyla is the botanical name for Qld Blue Couch and is now regarded as one of the top 100 invasive weed species in many areas of Australia.
- Some small patches of Qld Blue were observed in the 18th green; however the other Couch that was observed in the 18th green was of exceptional quality.

Course Superintendent, Nathan Lindsay was keen to promote as much Couch growth into the putting surface as possible over the next few weeks before the cooler autumn weather begins, the methods he will use are;

- Sprigging
- Plugging

- Use of stolons e.g.: (Tiff Dwarf on 11th)

Towards the end of March consideration could be given to sowing a Rye grass into any bare areas that still exist, to give a more acceptable putting surface until next spring.

It is understood the club has secured a 21 year lease on the property which gives some certainty around future course works.

Therefore consideration should be given to the conversion of all the greens to 'hybrid' Couch. The 3rd green could be viewed as an acceptable surface for all the course as it would be less expensive than some of the new varieties, and the 3rd green itself would become a 'nursery' green as scarifying's, corings etc. would yield propagation material for any new green surface.

Whilst the Couch has obviously performed better than the Bent/Poa under the difficult circumstances listed above, any turf would perform better on a properly constructed profile i.e.: sub-base, drainage adequate root zone material etc.

The club is fortunate to have the services of Mr. Lindsay, as he is well versed in this area; however consideration should be given to engaging the services of a Golf Course Architect to develop a Master Plan as far as future greens design is concerned, as this system is often seen as money well spent.

- Golf by Design (Jim Wilcher)
- Richard Chamberlain Golf

Are two well experienced, well respected such companies who are worth consideration.

A visit to the Par 3 course at Terry Hills would be a worthwhile exercise as they have had 328 Couch greens for many years, and the Course Superintendent would probably be more than happy to share his knowledge on surface preparation in the Sydney region.

As far as short term improvement of underlying factors are concerned;

- Hollow tyning should be deep enough to penetrate the Black Layer.
- Solid tyning e.g.: Verti-drain should also go beyond Black layer 'horizon'.
- Mini tyning to remove that from Bent/Poa sward.

Would all help improve 'gas exchange'.

Root Pruning:

Several greens were seen to be impacted by root systems of nearby trees and purpose-built machines are available for hire which do a very neat job with virtually no impact on the trees.

Hand weeding of 'Crowfoot' grass is being undertaken by several volunteers and a sharp steak knife is the best method when used to cut just below the "crown" of the plant, thereby eliminating the removal of the massive root system.

SUMMARY

Whilst conversation of Marrickville's greens to Couch may be seen by some as a very radical move, it should be noted that some of the most prestigious tournaments around the world are played on these grasses.

In conclusion thank you for allowing me to visit and I wish all concerned the best for the future.



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Thomson Geer are leading corporate lawyers who have serviced golf and the general club industry for over 25 years.

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CONTACT: Brett Boon - Partner
EMAIL: bboon@tglaw.com.au
MOBILE: 0414 808 265
WEBSITE: www.tglaw.com.au

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CONTACT: Lindsay Verdon - Head of Hospitality & Entertainment
EMAIL: lindsay.verdon@paynterdixon.com.au
MOBILE: 0407 428 526
WEBSITE: www.paynterdixon.com.au

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CONTACT: Graeme Beattie - Partner
EMAIL: graeme.beattie@worrells.net.au
PHONE: 02 8844 1200
WEBSITE: www.worrells.net.au

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As your appointed general insurance broker CeeJaze is committed to undertake the following activities:

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- Recommend the appropriate insurer to match the risk;
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CONTACT: Craig Fretwell
EMAIL: craigf@iaa.net.au
PHONE: 0412 701 647
WEBSITE: www.insuranceadviser.net/ceejaze

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CONTACT: Chris Walsh - Head of Property
EMAIL: christopher.walsh@heworth.com.au
PHONE: 0401 847 966
WEBSITE: www.heworth.com.au



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TURF IMPROVEMENT

Irrigation water's purpose is to carry oxygen to the roots of the plant. Higher oxygen levels in water improve the plant's ability to photosynthesise, develop roots, resist pests and diseases, utilise nutrients in the soil, and withstand environmental and mechanical stress.

Nanobubble Technology's Sports Turf Solution is a proprietary system that can increase oxygen levels in irrigation water from all sources, by creating nanoscopic-sized bubbles of oxygen gas in the water. Due to their incredibly small size, the bubbles are able to remain stable in the water without bursting, meaning better uptake of oxygen by the roots of the plant. This gives nanobubbles the unique ability to hold more oxygen in water, and to hold it for longer than traditional methods like jet aerators and paddlewheels.

Other benefits include pest reduction, pathogen reduction (eg Pythium), improved fertilizer efficiency, and wastewater treatment.

For more information on the system and how it can work for your course, contact Olivia Kerr as per the details below.

CONTACT: Olivia Kerr
EMAIL: sales@nanobubble.com.au
PHONE: (02) 9795 2430
WEBSITE: www.nanobubble.com.au



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EMAIL: sales@vendigolf.com.au
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WEBSITE: www.vendigolf.com.au

