



GLASGOW GOLF CLUB – GAILES LINKS

Advisory Report on the Golf Course on behalf of the R&A Championship Committee

Report date: 4th April 2014
Consultant: Jay Dobson

CONFIDENTIAL

Date of Visit: 1st April 2014

Visit Objective: To carry out the inspection of the golf course ahead of the 2014 Final Qualifying and make recommendations for progress towards this.

Present: Mr George Ross – Captain
 Mr Jim Brown – Greens Chairman
 Mr Brian Dickson – Course Manager
 Mr Jay Dobson – STRI Ltd

Weather: Approximately 8mm of rain fell prior to and during inspection.

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Executive Summary

- Our last inspection was carried out in October 2013 and showed the course to be in excellent condition going into winter. We have carried out a couple of pop in visits since then just to review ongoing works and to check on impact from the weather. As noted some 8mm of rain fell during the day of inspection on top of an extremely wet period during December, January, February and March. During this period over 1m of rainfall was the 'norm' in the west of Scotland this having an impact again on water tables on links courses throughout the west.
- One of the positives from the spring is some better temperatures of both soil and air in comparison to last year. This means that the course is well progressed with all of the surfaces showing some good early season growth and recovery from winter condition.
- Substantial work has again been carried out on the course including some planned selective tree work and some bunker works which are to a high standard.
- Greens and greens complexes were excellent for the time of year showing good, firm and consistent surfaces in response to sanding and increased maintenance. Already around 116 tonnes has been applied to greens and some 50 tonnes to approaches, which obviously is making a significant difference to these areas. We noted at our last inspection that firmness on approaches was considerably improved and this was again notable despite the wetter conditions at inspection.
- The surfactant programme is already in place with Revolution applied to the greens and Aquasorb to fairways.
- Review of winter play showed good management and protection to fairways around the course.
- A further review of the winter programme prompted the need to put some further protocols in place for further maintenance of the grasslands as an ongoing concept with a planned ecology visit by Bob Taylor from STRI next year. This will allow further progress with the recovery of the heather stands and grasslands around the course.
- Some minor issues due to the water table were noted once again with a small area towards the rear left hand side of the 17th requiring some immediate work to strip, drain and re-turf. This will be completed by the end of the week.
- Further discussions on maintenance post Final Qualifying will focus on organic matter (to be tested in June) and allow us to move further forward with the playing qualities and ball/turf interaction on greens. We feel that the Graden sand injector will be a worthwhile introduction in the maintenance programme.
- Further review of the late year programme post playing season took place with an agreement to look at the gorse issues to the right hand side of the 4th fairway, which are now becoming invasive and further work is required to remove the trees on the carry of the drive to the 7th to open out the fairway landing area and recover the original ethos of the hole.

Key Observations

Greens



These showed good density and uniformity at the current 5mm height of cut. They were firm to walk on and canopy closure appeared to be good with a uniform condition noted from green site to green site.

- There was a notable predominance of bentgrass, most of which appeared to be in good condition with little of the discolouration noted last year during the cold conditions to be seen. In addition, there appeared to be less of the early season seed heading from the annual meadow grass (*Poa annua* sp) than we noted last year. However this is likely to raise its head again as we move through spring and the usual refinement protocols will be required to cope with this. Hopefully this will be a gradual process this year and not a short lived but high impact issue as it was last.
- Generally uniformity on the greens was good with a few visual imperfections. Little disease scarring and traffic impact was seen despite some relatively heavy use over the winter and it was noted that growth was significantly earlier and better than last year during the drier and colder conditions.

Profiles

- Profile condition continues to improve with a good incorporation of sand top dressing in the upper profile. This dilutes the organic matter, which we have discussed in the past, and significantly helps surface firmness.

- Generally all of the samples taken showed a homogenous set of conditions with no evidence of chemical or physical problems relating to organic matter or water table. Rooting depth and density are good and again well progressed due to the milder temperatures.
- A couple of the damper areas did show some potential for 'sealing' however a return to drier conditions will probably mitigate against this without any further intervention.

Disease

- It was reported that there was some fusarium activity towards the end of 2013, however this was common at the time due to relatively high temperatures and continued growth. No carry over from this was noted at inspection.

Pests

- Leather jacket activity is high at present however there appeared to be no particular issues on the greens at Gales. Siren insecticide has already been applied and we feel this should control any potential issues.
- Worm casting remains an issue here and there and is something which we have discussed previously. We tested the water last year and found the pH to be around 6.9 (i.e. just the acid side of neutral). However we feel that this will still require you to use a buffer when applying carbendazim to maximise the impact from the product. Please note our points with regard to using an adjuvant such as Scuba or Sward as well.

Discussion

- The greens are in excellent condition for the time of year and have significantly improved growth and condition (compared to last year) during the drier and colder period. This allows us to work well on sward refinement and get them settled satisfactorily for play. Further assessment will be carried out prior to Final Qualifying in the later parts of June with a view to taking more data and working on playing quality ahead of this.

Tees



Championship tees

- Tee condition was generally excellent, protection of the main platforms during the winter months paying dividends.
- The programme for protection of the rearmost and Championship platforms will remain as per last year as will the management of these for play.

Fairways



- Fairways showed good protection over the winter months with little in the way of divot taking even on those where there was no lift and drop in the semi rough. Any divots have already been sanded and seeded and the programme will continue to focus on protection where appropriate.
- Aquasorb surfactant has already been applied and there was some notable recovery on some of the drier high spots from last year.

Bunkers



- As per usual a significantly large bunker programme has been carried out over the winter with some 30 bunkers being revetted and remodelled. The photograph shows the dropped face on the right hand side greenside bunker of the 4th, which was agreed last year, a significant improvement. In addition, some six sumps were installed while this work was being carried out.

Other works



- The planned work to remove the trees around the 14th green and the area of the 15th tee has been completed and is currently settling. Notably the area to the right hand side of the 15th tee which was previously cleared has now shown signs of recovery with the finer grasses establishing from the seed bank along with some heather.
- These works are to a high standard and should allow recovery of the links grassland and heather stands as we discussed and agreed previously.



- A new fence has been installed around the 10th green to the 11th tee, which is also positive.

Key Recommendations

Greens



- There had been some significant rainfall prior to and during the inspection; however the area in the photograph (rear left hand side 17th green) has apparently created some issues over the wet period from December onwards.
- We have had issues here with the water table on the approach, which was attended to by Brian and the greenkeeping team ahead of the Amateur Championship; however this would appear to be a separate issue and requires some intervention. As we discussed, stripping the turf (approximately 4m²), while removing thatch and organic matter, further root zoning and taking two runs to the perimeter of the green to the wet area associated with the irrigation pipework would be a sensible option. This work would be completed by the time you receive the report and should settle nicely over the remainder of the spring.
- General greens condition as we noted is good and the standard management protocols are already in place. There is a requirement for fertiliser application in the near future (8:0:6 at half rate) followed by your normal SSD at half rate and the Porthcawl product. This should settle the greens nicely going into the later parts of spring and early summer.
- As we noted, the annual meadow grass populations are now starting to produce some seed which will require a similar level of refinement as per usual. However hopefully the process will be more staggered this year due to the better temperatures and should be less of an issue with some light verticutting and general management.
- Further assessment will be carried out ahead of Final Qualifying on the 24th June, which will allow us to assess both agronomic condition and playing quality.

Tees



- As usual the rearmost tees will be protected sympathetically ahead of Final Qualifying and refinement and maintenance work will be carried out as per usual. No particular issues were noted with regard to the teeing grounds.
- The only issue raised was that of visibility from the 7th Championship Tee, as can be seen from the photograph above there is no visibility at all of the fairway or in fact the right hand side semi rough and heather stands. There was question as to whether or not some sympathetic removal of gorse at the top of the bank on the carry could be carried out prior to Final Qualifying. This should be further investigated.

Paths



- Following further discussion on the use of rubber grass mats, we feel that it would be worthwhile incorporating these in your traffic management. We discussed the concept last year in our report and feel that as a means of protecting the golf course from increasing winter play, is a worthwhile option. The photographs below show the circumstances we discussed where installation of the rubber mats has resulted in protection of what was previously a very damaged area.



- We note that you have also seen the installation at Royal Dornoch and can therefore support this going forward.

Vegetation and Management



- We reviewed the trees associated with the 1st tee with a view to making a decision as to whether they should be removed or not.
- The tree to the left hand side front of the 1st tee has some significant damage, has two particularly large boughs which overhang part of the tee, the perimeter of the tee and the rear of the 18th green. Purely from a health and safety stand point we feel it is important to remove this as there could be issues particularly ahead of Final Qualifying with spectators standing in this area.
- As to the tree to the right hand side front of the 1st tee, this has significant line of sight issues and should be removed at the same time.

Ongoing issues



- This area was opened out and the gorse cleared with a view to recovering heather and grassland in the area. This has to an extent been achieved however we feel that getting some grass established amongst the heather stand should be a priority now.
- Recommendations should be as per discussions; raking up the existing seed bank and surface and overseeding.



- We reviewed the drier areas on the course where recovery has been slow following the dry weather last year. The photograph shows the left hand side of the 11th fairway where the surface has become somewhat thin. However we feel that there is no particular point in working to improve matters here in the short term although it may be looked at as a project for the future. Balls are unlikely to come to rest on the bank and generally roll down onto the semi rough in any case.



- As noted in our last report and as discussed previously in this one, the trees to the left hand side of the copse on the carry of the 7th require removal as they significantly impact on the playability of the holes. This is to be planned for winter work this year.

Signed

Jay S Dobson
Turfgrass Agronomist (Scotland), STRI Ltd

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The STRI Programme provides golf courses with measurements and data that help to monitor and assess golf course performance. The R&A has recently developed CourseTracker (www.coursetracker.org), a free, online business management tool for golf courses, to record, review and analyse golf club performance across many areas of your business, including the golf course. STRI believes The R&A CourseTracker combined with the STRI Programme provides the tools you need to objectively monitor and assess your golf course performance.