

COURSE REPORT MARCH 2010

Introduction

Winter report. Well there's a term you can use with frustration! It certainly has been that and has had quite a bearing on what has been achieved. As with many years the planned winter program has been compromised due to the weather but it's been a long time since having experienced one such as this year. We have however managed to complete some of the projects on our program but have had to alter and reschedule a few projects that would or could have been carried out at later dates. The main areas within our scheduled plans that have been or are close to completion are the 8th tee, 12th left hand bunker and clearing and opening up the bank in front of the clubhouse. The large bunker on the first hole has been softened and turfed and the bunker further on has been returfed/refaced. A number of areas on other bunkers on the course have been patched where required. We have planted over 60 trees on the lower field along with a number of shrubs and extended the footpath on the 9th tee areas. I have listed below in slightly more detail all of the above and what was required.

Cliff top bank behind the 1st tee and in front of the clubhouse - it was requested that we removed and managed the blackthorn on this bank both to open the view up and to control and prevent the overhanging and collapsing hedge onto the public footpath just outside the course property. On starting this it became apparent that the blackthorn which is 90% of the bank was too far gone and collapsing in on itself thus, when cutting it back it became impossible to get a point of finish that both looked good as well as supporting itself sufficiently. We therefore had to keep going right through to the bottom of the bank, both cutting back the whole site of the blackthorn and having to cut back some scrappy trees and elder also. The very poor weather conditions allowed us to take the time necessary to clear the whole site right back to the boundary fence. The blackthorn will regenerate and we have planted more young plants in the larger areas made open by this action. The plants are mainly blackthorn, hawthorn and some gorse all of which are tolerant of the conditions so near the coast. The area around the practice net and between the larger trees will be planted with grass and has had a number of bulbs planted to improve the outlook from the clubhouse and car park.

On the first hole it was necessary to soften some of the mound on the large bunker that was seeded last year to allow for mowing with the rough cutter. As you may already be aware it was agreed to make this a grass bunker mainly because it was proving difficult in keeping sand in this bunker and was costing far too much to maintain. However, it will still have a role to play being grass and with selective planting of trees in this area in years to come it will be just as difficult. We also had to reface the bunker further on due to having burned off areas from sand splash over the years. This is not uncommon in situations such as this and is something we have to live with and take the necessary action when required. This involves the digging out of the sandy area that builds up with both sand splash and wind blowing sand out. We dug out around 12 inches and replaced with topsoil then returfed. This action has also been carried out on bunkers at 15, 12, and 9 and will be ongoing for years to come as part of normal maintenance.

On the third hole we have relandscaped and turfing the area on the right side in the rough both to aid mowing and for safety reasons. It was decided to leave the large mound in the middle of this area for the time being but to review this in the future.

The 8th tee yellow and white has been lifted and leveled but has been split into two levels as it was going to prove difficult to sustain one large tee on one level without transporting much more soil onto the site - something that was not necessary. The turf was used from the old tee and will need further action to bring it up to a good standard in the spring and it is hoped the tee will be back in action as soon as possible in the spring, weather permitting.

The path from the 9th tee has been extended down to the ladies tee on requests from the ladies as it was felt that this area was unsafe during wet weather. This will be monitored as it may be that this path could be extended further in the future.

Trees on the 12th left hand side within the rough (carry area) - mainly pines - have been cleared and cut back. The lower branches have been cut to help and aid the trees development. This will also help speed of play as it was felt that this area contributed to slow play on occasions. The left greenside bunker has been redesigned and drained with the area around being regraded to allow for the enlargement of the apron area which this bunker will be incorporated into. The green will be enlarged/widened slightly at the front and sides. When carrying out the renovation of this bunker we discovered a number of older drains which came from the green but on investigation their viability proved largely ineffective. It was decided to install a new main drain through the green whilst in the area as this green does have problems with drainage in the centre to rear areas.

On the 13th it was hoped to have installed steps and or a ramp onto the lower tee area this winter. However it has proved difficult due to the weather and it was also decided to hold back on this project as there could be the prospect of this tee being raised to the height of the path with material from a nearby project at Cross Lane Hospital. We have been in talks with the hospital as to this possibility although this is by no means a definite plan and we need further investigation on this before reporting on.

The 17th and 18th holes have had a number of trees planted to both tighten up and to help in safety and security of property along North Cliff Avenue in the coming years. They are mainly Sycamore, Cherry, and Rowan trees as they seem to be the best suited to our situation on the lower field. It is our plan to continue planting trees throughout the coming years to further enhance and improve the course as well as replace natural wastage.

Conclusion

As with any winter program we try and achieve as much as is reasonably possible and cost effective but winters such as we have just encountered restrict what we can achieve. It has also proven very difficult this past year or two with budgetary constraints in the present financial climate but we can and do achieve good value for money at this club when carrying out such projects in-house where possible. If an outside contractor were to be used the cost would be prohibitive to achieve all that we do here at

North Cliff. There are many new challenges ahead in the coming years with the changes in the climate over the past few years both weather and financially and we need a new and more flexible attitude when planning winter programs as well as identifying new and more pressing problems due to these changes. The most obvious being longer wet summers causing problems that manifest themselves in the winter. i.e. wetter greens due to this change. Some of our greens will require greater and better drainage to help overcome this problem. Two greens in particular that are proving difficult in winter for keeping in play are the 5th and 8th although this can be a problem on other greens, be it localized areas or whole greens. This will need reviewing and a plan of action made so that the course can adapt to climatic changes as well as demands for play. Another green that has shown great changes over the past few years is the 7th. It has moved greatly over the years in its character, this movement/settlement has greatly compromised our ability to find both fair and legal pin positions on this green. This movement may be due to many factors of which I would not want to speculate on but again this green may need to be redesigned if we are to solve this problem. In my 36 years in this profession I have seen many changes in climate, approach and attitudes to such problems such as just mentioned. Not wishing to sound complacent we have come through this winter fairly well compared to some clubs I have both heard of and seen. One thing is for certain I/ we have many challenges ahead in the coming years thus giving us much food for thought.

I have included a brief report on conditions on the course generally.

Greens

The greens have come through the winter in a fairly good condition with very little scarring from disease and or wear. The tera spike holes have closed up very well and it is hoped to spike with the small machine in the coming month to aid drying out. They will be getting a spring feed in March when the threat of frost has receded long enough to do so in preparation for the spring. They will require a light top-dress and some over seeding in April/May, It is hoped that in May or early June to start the planned program of spraying with a new chemical that will reduce the Rye grass within the sward.

Tees & aprons

Again both the tees and aprons have coped very well considering the weather we have experienced and will get the necessary treatments in the coming month to aid there recovery and repair.

Fairways

The fairways have all been tera spiked again this year which has helped greatly in keeping them dry under the circumstances. Worm casting has not been a great problem as in previous years and this has helped the budget greatly as we normally have a bill for £1500 on treatments for this problem. There will have to be an extensive program of weed control in the coming year as this was reduced last year to aid budget constraints.

Bunkers

The bunkers have suffered particularly badly this winter with constant flooding and washing off with the large amount of rain. It has often proven difficult to replenish them when this happens as we would often find that we could spend a couple of days raking only for them to be washed out again the next day - rather sole destroying. Often when the water receded it was not possible to rake due to them being frozen solid. Knowing that this is not our strong point at North Cliff we do try and do what we can within a very limited budget. However I will be reviewing the sand this year and trying to source a cheaper and suitable type - something proving very difficult as sand costs seem to have gone through the roof this past couple of years and ,no, it's not as simple as" going onto the beach and helping our selves" as has been suggested - we need the right type of sand that has both the right particle size and is salt free.

Forestry

As reported earlier we have made some progress here with the planting of a number of trees between 17 and 18 and the trimming back of branches to improve the trees and playing ability on 12. We have removed a number of dead trees elsewhere on the course but this was necessary mainly on safety grounds and they were mainly out of playing areas. Again we will be reviewing this area for the coming winter program.