

THE SOUTHPORT GOLF CLUB

# COURSE REPORT



Earlier this year on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2010 we communicated to all members that the Board of Directors had requested the General Manager and Course Superintendent conduct a comprehensive review of our bi-annual greens renovation procedures.

The Board of Directors, the General Manager and the Course Superintendent are all unsatisfied with the current and recent presentation of our course. We, like you our members, take great pride in presenting our golf course and we are certainly disappointed with the current condition of the course. As a result the aforementioned review of "greens renovation practices" was widened in its scope to include the entire course.

This review has been tabled, analysed and discussed at length by the Board of Directors over the past month. At the Board Meeting last Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> August 2010 this review and a range of strategies to address these issues were endorsed. The following is a summary of both the review and the strategies endorsed:

The review included a wide ranging soil analysis program that sampled greens and fairways throughout the course over this period, with the samples analysed by an independent laboratory and the results reported to the club. The results of these soil tests identified:

- a cumulative build up of exchangeable sodium in fairways,

- that all major elements of the greens were inside the acceptable parameters required.

The review also included both the Superintendent and the General Manager consulting with a number of peers to research the renovations practices of other similar clubs and resorts in South-East Queensland.

**Three main issues in relation to the presentation and playability of the course were identified:**

GREENS:

The greens are not to the standard expected, with particular reference to the disappointing cover of grass on greens such as 1, 3 and 4. The severity of the lines in some greens during this winter has been widely acknowledged as more prevalent than in previous years also.

FAIRWAYS:

The fairways are not to the standard expected. Fairways 3, 4, and 15 are well below the appearance/coverage/health and playability of previous winters and current expectations. Other fairways in general are extremely firm in places, with a thin coverage of grass.

OVERALL APPEARANCE:

The course overall appears untidy with a large amount of bark, twigs, leaves, etcera covering fairways and rough.

## COMING EVENTS

**\$5,000 DRAW**

**FRIDAY 3RD SEPT.**

**JAZZ ARVO**

**SUNDAY 12TH SEPT**

**TRIVIA NIGHT**

**FRIDAY 17TH SEPT**

**CAPTAIN'S  
TROPHY**

**SAT. 18TH SEPT**

**CLUB CLOSED FOR  
RENOVATIONS**

**MONDAY 20TH,  
TUESDAY 21ST,  
WEDNESDAY 22ND  
SEPTEMBER**

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

REVIEW COMPLETED 2

STRATEGIES TO BE IMPLEMENTED 3

COURSE REPORT SUMMARY 4

MOTORISED CART USAGE 4

## REVIEW COMPLETED

Once these 3 issues were identified the review focused on researching what factor/s has caused these issues. The findings are:

### GREENS:

Factors identified as causing the decreased playability and presentation of the greens:

1. The aggressive scarification of 6 greens during February 2010 renovations.
2. Increased usage of the course - over the 2009/2010 financial year records show that there was a 10.13% increase in the number of rounds of golf compared to the previous year. A total of 56,109 rounds of golf were played, equating to an additional 5,264 rounds of golf. Records indicate that this is the most number of rounds ever played on our course. Increased turnover/rounds result in increased compaction.
3. Harsh winter - once the ground temperature drops during the winter months, growth rates of the greens turf reduce considerably. The past winter has included lower than normal overnight lows in temperature which have been a contributing factor.
4. The decision to alter the scheduling of the February 2010 renovations by pushing back the renovations two weeks from the 8<sup>th</sup> February to 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2010.
5. Shade from maturing and encroaching trees. Many trees block out the sun for substantial periods of time each day that the greens need. Extensive sunlight is obviously a key factor in maximizing the growth of grass on our greens.
6. The age of some of our greens. The greens on holes 1, 3, 4, and 12 are the oldest greens on the course. The materials used to construct these greens many decades ago are contributing to substandard drainage rates which result in these 4 greens failing to drain as quickly as required, and as quickly as the other 14 greens on the course. The effect of compaction and wear from traffic is increased on moist ground rather than dry ground.

### FAIRWAYS:

Factors identified as causing the decreased playability and presentation of the fairways:

1. The decision to undertake the weed eradication program in April 2010. Whilst numerous fairways such as the 13<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> fairways recovered satisfactorily from this spraying with a substantial reduction in weeds, other fairways such as the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> have suffered considerably and have not recovered.
2. The decision to spray an "old fairway" (the 4<sup>th</sup> fairway) was a mistake.
3. Increased usage of the course as detailed in the adjacent column. Increased turnover/rounds result in increased compaction and the extensive usage of motorised carts on the fairways only exacerbates this issue, especially after wet weather.
4. Harsh Winter - once the ground temperature drops during the winter month's growth rates of the fairway turf reduce considerably as per the adjacent column.
5. Shade from maturing and encroaching trees. The 3<sup>rd</sup> fairway is a prime example where the large trees that line the left side of the fairway block out a substantial amount of sunlight each day. Direct sunlight for the maximum number of hours possible is critically important to a strong coverage of grass, particularly during winter.

### OVERALL APPEARANCE:

1. The main factor identified as causing the decreased overall untidy appearance of the course with a large amount of bark, twigs, leaves, etcera covering fairways and rough, was the diminishing performance and malfunctioning of the course vacuum machine (the large red box on wheels that trails behind a tractor).

## STRATEGIES TO BE IMPLEMENTED

**After identifying the causes of the decreased presentation and playability of the greens, fairways and overall appearance of the course the Board of Directors agreed to implement the following strategies to address these issues:**

1. Implement a greens renovation procedure for September 2010 that addresses the effects of this winter's issues. This Sept. greens 1, 2B, 3, 4, 6, and 12 will receive a light groom/de-thatch to promote growth with the balance of the greens de-thatched using the pedestrian matabay units, unlike previous years. This will reduce the width of the lines on the greens and will produce a less aggressive cut-slice into the greens. Coring will be undertaken on all greens using 1/2 inch (12mm) hollow tynes and this will provide a large area for amendments, fertiliser and sand to enter the putting surfaces which will greatly benefit the greens after such a difficult winter.
2. Implement a new comprehensive fairway renovation procedure at a total cost of \$40,000. In previous years only minimal fairway renovations have been undertaken. This year nine fairways are to be verti-drained to decrease the compaction issues on these fairways. Verti-draining involves inserting a solid metal tyne (cylinder) into the fairway at a 30cm depth and then the tyne kicks out to a 45 degree angle underneath the turf to alleviate the built up compaction in the soil profile. Following stage 1, fairways 3, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17, and 18 are to be top-dressed with 7mm to 10mm of sand and rubbed in to improve growth and playability; which will be followed by a fertiliser application. All fairways will then be aerated to further de-compact these high traffic areas whilst also creating cavities in fairways to prepare for the insertion of the blanket gypsum application.
- Extensive soil testing has identified increased exchangeable sodium in numerous fairways which is caused by long periods without rain & by constant long term irrigation using recycled water. To address this, a blanket application of gypsum will be undertaken to reduce the exchangeable sodium percentage on fairways. The recent soil test results and the obvious visual compaction on the fairways highlight the need for fairway renovations to become the standard procedure for future renovations and the success of this new fairway renovation strategy will be analysed by follow up post renovation soil testing. This strategy for renovating fairways is based on extensive soil testing and on exhaustive research and analysis of other clubs' and resorts' practices in South-East Queensland. Numerous resorts and a couple of other clubs have used this practice in recent years.
3. Commit to focusing all greens practices to allow for a "minor" greens renovation in Feb. of each year, conditions permitting.
4. Re-schedule the February 2011 renovations two weeks earlier to Monday 7<sup>th</sup> February to improve the grass's rate of recovery.
5. Re-schedule the September 2011 renovations two weeks later to Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> October to improve the grass's rate of recovery.
6. Enrol the Course Superintendent in additional industry specific professional development to ensure that he continues to draw upon the latest greenkeeping research and developments, with a particular focus on greens renovation practices.
7. Implement a more conservative policy for the decision making process to permit or not permit motorised cart usage on the course after substantial rainfall, particularly during cooler months.
8. Increase annual budgeted expenditure on tree trimming/thinning and removal by 500% from \$4,000 per annum to \$20,000 per annum for a trial period for the next two years.
9. Conduct an audit of the entire course to establish all trees that have a significant negative effect on the presentation and playability of our course, with particular focus on greens. At present, 4 trees behind the 3<sup>rd</sup> green, 3 trees beside the 4<sup>th</sup> green and 1 tree beside the 6<sup>th</sup> green that were previously stopping direct sunlight onto these greens for substantial periods of time have already been identified and removed.
10. Purchasing a replacement course vacuum machine to clean up the leaf litter on the course.

## **STRATEGIES TO BE IMPLEMENTED** (CONTINUED)

11. Continue budgetary increases for expenditure for maintaining the presentation of the course. Over the past 2009/2010 financial year course expenditure increased by 5.8% to \$1,006,000, despite subscription fees only increasing by 3.1%. An additional \$361,000 was spent on redeveloping the 18<sup>th</sup> hole whilst an additional \$23,000 has been spent this month to improve the drainage on the 8<sup>th</sup> hole and to construct a new 17<sup>th</sup> tee. Significant funds are committed to maintaining and improving the presentation of the course, and this is and will continue to be the priority area of expenditure at our club in coming years.

12. Remain committed to the continuous incremental implementation of the course masterplan with \$550,000 planned for expenditure for the redevelopment of the 1<sup>st</sup> hole which will include the construction of a new green, in September 2011. This commitment ensures that the drainage systems, bunkers, irrigation system, playability and quality of grass are all improved throughout the course.

---

As you can see the we have:

- (a) Reiterated that the objective is to present the course in the best possible condition all year round
- (b) Identified the main issues preventing this
- (c) Identified the contributing factors that have created these issues
- (d) Implemented 12 strategies to address these issues

The Board of Directors, General Manager and Course Superintendent are wholly committed to the successful implementation of the above strategies to return our course back to the standard we all expect in the short term, with the immediate objective to return the course to the standard expected by all members. I encourage all members who have additional questions in relation to any of the matters detailed in this newsletter or regarding the presentation of the course to either see the General Manager to discuss this further, or alternatively to submit their question in writing to the Greens Committee.

---

## **MOTORISED CART USAGE**

It is estimated that over the past year on 21,000 different occasions a motorised cart was used by members and their guests for a round of golf. Carts are an integral part of our club, but also do contribute to the "hardpan or bear" lies around greens and on fairways that no-one enjoys having to play a shot off.

Please:

- Take notice of the cart directional signs that are on the course
- Keep your cart on a cart path whenever possible. For example, use the cart path down the right side of the 15th hole, don't drive down the middle of the fairway, AND, keep your cart on the concrete path the entire time you are playing the 2nd hole.
- Keep your cart on the cart path ANY TIME you are within 30 metres of a tee or green, as per page 10 of the fixture book.

Your cooperation can help us to improve the presentation of our course.

---

