



Course Report. December '22 – April '23.

By Robin Little

General.

The very cold and relatively dry February and March has, as ever caused a very slow start to the year. Please be patient at the start of the season, grass growth is always very slow to start here at Penrith due to the elevation of the club and this year is no exception - please remember that we were covered in snow mid-March. Now we are in April and although we had a wet start to the month, we now have dry, cold and windy conditions and still have very low night time temperatures, which isn't going to support grass growth.

Greens & Aprons.

We have been fortunate enough not to have had any disease through the winter months, we believe that this is due to regular verti draining which keeps the greens free draining, our regular drip feeding and the cold, dry weather during January and February.

Regular Verti draining has been carried through the winter. The main purpose of this is to keep the greens as free draining as possible. Excessively damp conditions causes the grass to die back (this was the cause of the thin area in the centre of the 2nd green). The drier we can keep them during the winter, the more grass coverage we can maintain and the further on the greens will be in the early spring. Considering the weather that we have had since the beginning of January we are happy with grass coverage that we have for the time of year.

Tees.

In March a liquid application of turf hardener was applied, containing iron to blacken any moss, followed an application of 9 7 7 spring fertiliser in early April. It is our intention to scarify tees as soon as possible but our workload will dictate when this will be possible.

Machinery.

All winter servicing of machinery is now complete. Cutting units from the fairway, surrounds and tees mowers have been sent away for sharpening and are now back on the machines and ready to go when the grass starts growing.

Our greens mower has now been returned to the golf club; it has been at Lloyds since Christmas due to a long running problem with vibration in the cutting units. All 3 of the cutting units have now been completely rebuilt with new cylinders at a total cost of £9000. I have been negotiating with Lloyds for years on this issue and despite the machine being 2 years out of warranty Toro have made a £7500 contribution to the cost of rebuild. The £1500 cost to the club is reasonable and hopefully it means that we can get this season and another out of the current machine without any big repair bills or the significant cost of buying a new machine.

The tractor mounted leaf blower which we tried out at the end of November has been purchased and has been out several times since then clearing leaves and windblown debris.

Project Work.

- Drainage work on greens 2 and 16 is now completed, the turf that was replaced in January has rooted well and both greens have been rolled several times and top dressed. Regular top dressing will continue throughout the season. The area behind the 2nd green will be seeded as soon as possible.
- The Bunker on the front left of the 4th has been rebuilt. The lack of availability of bunkermat bunker liner has prevented us doing any more complete rebuilds. Repairs to holes in liners and the turf around bunkers will be done instead. We have made available 60 tons of sand for topping up bunkers which will start in May and will continue into the season.
- Removing trees to widen the gap on the 4th hole has been completed. As well as widening the gap which had become unfairly tight, a lot of extra light can now get in which will improve grass growth on a lot of the bare areas. The areas which have been reinstated with rootzone will be seeded as soon as time allows.
- Tree pruning has been carried out on both sides on the 1st fairway and between the 5th and 6th fairways. Branches have been trimmed off to head height to allow easier grass cutting and make swinging a club in the trees easier. This work keeps greenstaff busy during frosty weather or when snow is on the ground.
- A drain has been installed along the left-hand side of the 9th tee and into the bottom tier of that tee. The path has been widened, re edged with new timber and re surfaced with new grey path material.
- Paths on the 3rd tee, 4th tee, and 13th have also been extended, re-edged and re surfaced. We have looked at 3 different options for re surfacing paths, the grey material we have selected is almost half the price of the existing Raisby golden gravel, and the greens committee believe it will look cleaner for longer. Should time allow we will re edge and re surface the 14th tee path as well.
- New Irrigation valve sets are required for the 1st green and 2nd tee they are leaking due to being rotten, and the 16th green requires a new station decoder. We will repair and replace these as soon as possible.
- The irrigation valve set which controls the 7th green is rotten and one of the electrical valves has failed completely, this all needs to be replaced as soon as possible.
- The electric cable which controls the irrigation for the 11th green has a break in it where it crosses the fairway – roughly in line with the middle of the quarry. Unfortunately, this means that we need to dig up the fairway to install a new cable, we need to do this as soon as possible and will do everything we can to minimise disruption to play.
- Behind the 3rd green there is a burst irrigation pipe and an electrical fault. The electrical fault is putting every tee and green off on the club house side of the road other than the 4th green and 13th tee. Having a reliable system to apply water to

greens is paramount and over the coming weeks irrigation repairs will take priority over everything after basic grass cutting and course set up.