

## ***Greens Committee Newsletter - June 2017***

Dear Member

If you are not a fan of lengthy reports, please bear with me and take the time to read this one, as it is a summary of most of the activities and work tackled this past year by the Greens Committee and Peter and his staff and I do believe it makes interesting reading.

Winter has arrived, resulting in shorter days, less turf growth and a slow down in mowing and slashing activity in certain areas of the clubhouse grounds and on the golf course. This is now an ideal opportunity for a number of our staff to take well-deserved leave and for the rest of us to focus on repairs and maintenance of equipment, clubhouse grounds and the golf course. For those who have frequented the club and played golf recently, you would have noticed that numerous projects are being undertaken focusing on “attention to detail”. Some 40 small to medium projects have been identified, as per separate attachment, which Peter and his staff hope to complete by the start of the spring season. If anyone feels they would like to assist in any of these projects, please let Peter or myself know. This would be most appreciated.

We have been receiving many favourable compliments from both members and visitors in respect of the condition of our golf course and greens. Thank you for this! It's good that the hard work and resulting changes made are being noticed, recognized and appreciated.

This year has been a really busy one, and was given a good kick-start with the introduction of the MWPP (Members Work Party Project) in August; many members rose to the challenge and took on various painting, gardening and other projects. It provided great motivation for the Greens Staff to see that they were not on their own and were getting support and help from the members. We have a wonderful, great-spirited team who love it when they are acknowledged and recognized for the effort they are putting into the grounds and course. So when you have an opportunity, please take a minute or so to chat to them and thank or compliment them on the work they are doing. I know this will make a big difference and be much appreciated by them!

Since this is our last report of 2016/17, a recap of work done during the past 12 months should give everyone some idea of the many projects undertaken and completed.

Besides focusing on the “attention to detail” items and general maintenance, the following are some of the projects undertaken:-

- a) Three new borehole pumps were installed in the newly sunk boreholes.
- b) Trenching and irrigation piping from the boreholes to the 17<sup>th</sup> dam was installed.
- c) 94 waterproof boxes were built and installed throughout the golf course to protect the wireless receiver circuit boards against water damage.
- d) 54 Tee Box plinths were erected, painted and equipped with sponsor advertising boards.
- e) New Tee Box and fairway distance markers and poles were made and installed. (PGA Standard: Tee Box markers are to the middle of the greens, whereas the fairway markers are to the front of the greens: Red - 100m; White - 150m; Blue - 200m)
- f) New divot and rubbish containers were made and installed on all white Tee Boxes.
- g) All out of bound and hazard stakes were upgraded and painted.
- h) Clubhouse and golf course signage was redesigned, printed and installed.

- i) The bunker next to the practice green was redesigned and constructed, incorporating a new catchment and water drainage system with special bunker sand.
- j) The Tuesday School paved cart path between the 7<sup>th</sup> green and 8<sup>th</sup> tee was prepared and installed.
- k) All gardens were cleaned up, numerous received a facelift and several new ones were constructed.
- l) A special Tee Box on the property of Pine Lake Inn was prepared and built for the Mpumalanga Inter- Provisional Championship Golf Tournament.
- m) The 4 shade net carports below the men's first Tee Box received a makeover with new shade net and a couple of coats of paint.
- n) A swale along the left hand side of the 13<sup>th</sup> out of bound fence was constructed.
- o) An installation of a new type of irrigation system, namely the Floppy Sprinkler System, was installed on the 9<sup>th</sup> for a trial and cost comparison purposes.
- p) A new sewer system for the clubhouse was constructed and installed.
- q) Last but most definitely not least, 18 months of extensive work took place on the greens to improve the receptiveness, consistency and speed.

We extend our thanks to those members who contributed to the MWPP in time or contributions. Much appreciated! To the advertisers of the Tee Box plinths, thank you for your support and we hope you get plenty of support and mileage from your advertising.

It would be remiss of me not to mention a few of our very special supporters that always dig deep in their pockets, making a major difference to the golf course and clubhouse grounds. They are Knittex, Maxi Beton, Gary Whittaker, NTT Toyota, Thomas Tyres, Milner Old Boys and the Tuesday School. Our grateful thanks go to them for their generosity and unwavering support.

Many visitors and members have been intrigued and somewhat surprised at the vast improvement in the golf course but in particular the greens. We have received numerous requests to explain what we have done to transform the greens in the last 12 months.

So, let me explain in brief. In October 2015, Peter and I consulted with Prof. Leon van Rensburg and discussed the problems we had with various diseases, poor growth and hardness and unreceptiveness of the greens. Soil analyses were conducted to ascertain pH levels, soil and root structures and nutrient levels. The results were mind-boggling. Soil acid levels were through the roof; root systems were only 4cm in length with virtually no new growth evident. Looking at the reports it was no surprise that the greens were rock hard and susceptible to all kind of disease.

A soil-conditioning program that focused on rectifying the pH and nutrient levels of the growing medium was formulated. The application of dolomitic lime and various minerals and nutrients began in earnest at the end of November 2015. Within a year the condition of the growing medium had improved to such an extent that the average length of roots had increased to 14cm. Root systems were flourishing and much stronger and healthier which resulted in the grasses being able to combat disease more effectively. With deeper and healthier root systems, the greens became more receptive to pitching balls. The greens still remained slow and inconsistent to the rolling and pitching ball due to the excessive thatch layer within the top 1cm of the cynodon grass.

Now, with an improved and stronger grass root system exceeding 14cm, the thatch or dead grass had to be extracted from the greens. Aggressive verti-cutting and mowing was introduced, albeit with much caution in the beginning, as we did not know how the grass would handle this type of treatment. Well, as we can see, it has work very well, together with hollow-tining and 3 treatments of fracking. Fracking is a process wherein air is injected into the growing medium, thus creating a sponge-like soil structure so that oxygen can get to the root system when water is applied to the greens.

Soil and leaf analyses are conducted on a regular basis now and adjustments to minerals and nutrients made in accordance to the grasses needs. Cynodon grass is a vigorous summer growing species with large leaves. As summer approaches, the application of what one can term, a leaf growth restrictor, namely Primo Maxx, will be applied to the greens to slow down leaf growth. In theory, this results in a smaller leaf size being produced by the cynodon grass, creating a smoother and faster surface.

We hope this explanation gives our members an insight into the complexities and what has to date, gone into transforming our greens and the playing behaviour thereof.

Now that we are making good headway with our greens and ratings racking up, the bunkers have become an area of concern. So too, as with the greens, many questions are now being asked as to what needs to be done and the respective costs to improve them. I have conducted some research with regards to sand types, particle size and drainage methods. We have 24 bunkers on the course and it is estimated that on average a bunker would cost about R10 000 to re-do.

Your Greens Committee would like to form a "Bunker Committee" to research this subject in full and then take it further by raising the funds and doing bunker by bunker. Should you be interested in being part of this committee and project, please let me know.

Much discussion was held at our last Greens Committee Meeting with regard to the "2-cart rule" per four ball. Most golfers understand and don't seem to have an objection to this when the golf course is water logged because one can physically see the damage and the mess made by golf carts. It is however, not only in the wet season that the carts cause damage. Despite most grass species being tough and resilient plants, the soil underneath becomes compacted with traffic. Water then has difficulty reaching the root system, eventually resulting in dead and unattractive bald areas such as we have in many areas on our course. Aeration and maintenance of such areas is costly and as we all know, our club does not have the budget to conduct this work. We have introduced demarcation stakes and roped off areas to minimize such damage. We are now going to construct and install a scatter zone at the end of the cart path on hole number 1 as a trial. We will be installing 100mm by 65mm diameter HDPE pipes vertically into the ground, half filling them with a growing medium and then planting grass. This may or may not work, only time and responsible driving by members and visitors will give us the answer to the problem.

It was unanimously agreed by your Greens Committee that the "2-cart rule" be reinstated for the protection of the course. This matter and decision has been registered with our Golf Committee and will be a subject of discussion at the Golf Section AGM.

The WRCC AGM will be held on 20th July, and members will have the opportunity to volunteer their services on the various committees. Jakkie Geldenhuys has served a 3-year term on the Greens Committee and has decided not to stand for a further 3 years. Our thanks and gratitude go to Jakkie for his valuable input and contribution during his term. Alan Urmson and John Robson have agreed to stand for election. Joan Leinberger and Laurie Rogers were both co-opted members and have agreed to serve on the committee for another year.

Finally, I need to acknowledge the time, work and huge contribution made by our Greens Committee and Greens Staff this year. It has been a pleasure working with all of them and being part of a team with so much passion and enthusiasm for what they do. So if you wish to be part of the Greens Committee, please let either Leesyl or one of our committee members know because we have lots of plans and work ahead of us this year and need as much help as possible.

Yours in sport.

Tommy Rogers