



## Course Managers May Report

My apologies, it has been a while since my last report.

With what now looks like we have had the wettest winter in the last 20 years and the the recent loss of two excellent members of staff who have moved on to further their careers, things have been a little stressed. In the 18 years I have been in green keeping I can honestly say I have never had to deal with such wet conditions over such a lengthy period. From mid December through to March we did not have three consecutive dry days, meaning the water table was continuously being topped up, making it very difficult to get out on the course with machinery.

Considering the amount of rain and snow we endured the course stood up to it amazingly well and now we are drier you can see that the fairways have recovered very quickly.

We continually discussed, at length, the playability of the course during this winter and I understand that some members thought we should close:- I can assure you I would not allow play if I thought the long term presentation of the course would be jeopardised. Saying that, there are areas of the course such as walkways and rough that were very wet and you may have felt at times that this justified closure, but we felt these areas did not effect play and would recover very quickly. Once again the roping off of the 15th/16th fairways, although unpopular, has meant that we have excellent grass coverage to start the season on the two fairways where we find it difficult to grow quality grass due to the shade.

Our winter bunker programme did go ahead as planned but only again after much discussion and there were times when we were digging tractors out of the mud that I thought we had made a mistake, but eventually all were completed and once the sand has settled they will be perfect. Returning the bunkers to original design with high faces means that in most cases they can be seen from the tee or approach shot which is much more visually attractive and makes the golfer think more about his approach. The steep faces do cause us some maintenance issues but if you could all remember to enter the bunker at the lowest point and not down the steep faces this would be a big help.

Drainage work at the right of the fourth green was unplanned but will be a very welcome improvement. While doing the bunkers it was found that the old drainage pipes in this area were completely blocked and totally ineffective. Unforeseen jobs of this size are not only time consuming but also a costly exercise and am grateful to the B&F committee for finding the extra funding to complete the new drainage, I am sure though that we will encounter more of these areas over the coming years and hope budgets will again allow for their completion.

Our greens maintenance was yet another thing we discussed at great length, but again, it was also decided to go ahead. My green keeping team were amazing, working long hard days to complete what is a back breaking job during hail storms and torrential rain. This was our most intense greens aeration programme to date but recovery is now nearly complete and I assure you it will have long term benefits. One of the advantages of our USGA greens is their playability throughout the winter, something that other clubs continually struggle with, but which aeration is essential to maintain.

As I am sure you have all noticed we now have drier weather and the grass is growing at an amazing rate, this did cause us problems at the end of the wet weather as we were unable to get mowers on the course but we are now back to normal and the course is starting to take shape. Fairway scarification is now complete and combined with our ongoing aeration will, I am sure, again see fairways improve.

As I said earlier we have recently lost two members of staff, this, on top of losing Ethan late last year has meant we have been busy recruiting. They have now been replaced by Ashley, Jonathan and two apprentices Josh and Callum, all who seem to be settling in well. Ashley joins us from Worcester cricket club and Jonathan who has no green keeping experience, but is an ex apprentice mechanic, will I'm sure be a great addition to the team.

Please take time to stop and introduce yourselves to them on the course.

Harvey and Sam will definitely be missed, especially Harvey(my right hand man) but I am confident the new team including Jammy, Simon and young Sam, who have all earned their promotions, will step up to the plate and take the course to yet another level.

We are all again looking forward to this season and with the Bridgestone challenge event now being held in August I am confident the course will again be in its best condition.

Enjoy your golf.

As usual your comments are appreciated and should you have any questions please do not be afraid to ask.

Karl Williams

## **The new team.**

Karl Williams, Course Manager

James Harrison, Deputy Course Manager

Simon Worrall, First Assistant Greenkeeper

Sam Oliver, Assistant Greenkeeper

Ashley Hill, Assistant Greenkeeper

Jon Pearson, Assistant Greenkeeper/Mechanic

Callum Lees, Apprentice Greenkeeper

Josh Wood, Apprentice Greenkeeper