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Northeast Region Green Section
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USGA GREEN SECTION TURF ADVISORY SERVICE REPORT

**DEDHAM COUNTRY & POLO CLUB
DEDHAM, MASSACHUSETTS**

August 20, 2008

Present: Mr. Michael W. Stachowicz, Superintendent
Mr. Barry Cullen, Green Committee
Mr. Roger Haynes, Green Committee
Mr. Paul Marandett, Green Committee
Mr. Ford Spaulding, Green Committee
Mr. James E. Skorulski, Senior Agronomist, USGA

INTRODUCTION

This report is provided for the Turf Advisory Service (TAS) visit conducted at Dedham Country & Polo Club on August 14, 2008.

It was a pleasure for me to return to Dedham Country & Polo Club to conduct this visit. The golf course is holding up well in what has become a very wet summer season. Fortunately, the maintenance programs that have been implemented over the past several years are improving soil conditions and reducing the impacts of the wet weather. This is especially true in the fairways where aggressive sand topdressing has been implemented. The ongoing tree removal work has also been effective for improving the growing environments and restoring the golf course closer to its original design intentions. Finally, the bunker restoration project, the green restoration work and the other project work has all been a positive addition to the golf course.

We used our time together to tour the golf course and look at the new bunkers as well as the progress of the soil management programs. Recommendations were provided for soil cultivation, green restoration, drainage, tree work and a number of other topics that will be covered in this report.

GREENS

Soil Management Programs

The aggressive core cultivation and topdressing practices for the greens are beginning to change the root zone in a positive way. The core cultivation and topdressing are removing an organic mat that developed in the root zone in the past. They are also incorporating more sand into the root zone to help create better drainage and the firmness that is required to produce and maintain the quality playing conditions that are expected by the membership. I cannot over emphasize the importance of creating firm surfaces. With the firmness comes natural pace and smoothness that is desired.

The core cultivation practices need to continue in an aggressive fashion. I recommend completing the practice on the close spacing in both the late summer and spring seasons to completely remove the organic mat that remains at a 2"-3" depth in the profile. Use larger tines for the late summer work and smaller 1/2" tines for the spring operation. I realize there will be disruption from the practices. However, this cannot be avoided if the root zone modification is to be completed. Once complete the scale of core cultivation will be reduced and completed to maintain the profiles in a good condition.

Solid tine cultivation should be continued as well on the greens through the summer season. This does not create significant surface disruption but is a good means to keep the upper root zone aerated and to maintain good water penetration through the root zone.

We also discussed some of the benefits that can be expected from deeper soil modification. The deep modification would be completed with the Floyd-McKay Drill & Fill machine. This operation is usually completed in mid-fall after play has slowed. The machine uses larger 3/4" augers to drill a hole 8"-10" deep. The machine then back fills those holes with sand. This will help to move water deeper into the soil profile. Adding sand at a deeper depth should also create firmer conditions in the long run. The deeper modification effort can be considered in the future once the upper 3"-4" of the profile has been completely modified with sand. That decision would be based on the firmness of the profiles at that point in time.



The drill-and-fill process offers the only practical means to modify the soil profiles to a deeper depth with sand. Golf courses use the practice to improve internal drainage and firm the soil profiles.

Deep aeration should be completed with the Verti-Drain machine with solid tines in late fall or spring. This continues to be the best means to fracture the compacted native soils below the 4" depth.

No. 2 Green

The back portion of #2 green has once again thinned. This is a difficult management area because of the traffic patterns and the shade created by a larger maple tree behind the green. We discussed means to improve internal drainage in the lower-lying area adjacent to the green. This would involve the installation of a dry well and perhaps piping water that would otherwise collect and freeze during the winter months. Removing a maple tree directly behind the green would also improve the turf's condition on the putting surface. The shade from the tree moves directly over this weak area.

Restoration

The green expansion program can proceed forward on #8 green and others. Good gains have been made in modifying the profiles in areas where the greens will be expanded. These areas were also fully recovered as result of the sod work. Mowing heights can continue to be lowered in small increments through the remainder of the season. Continue to remain patient with the mowing adjustments. Avoid cutting these areas if we get another period of extended wet weather that leaves the surfaces soft. The final mowing adjustments can be made next spring based on the turf's survival through the winter. The aggressive core cultivation practices must be extended into these areas to continue to modify the root zone with sand and create firmer conditions required to support the turf at putting green height.

The right side of #9 green will always be difficult to restore back to putting green height due to surface drainage issues and the high traffic that moves through this area. Maintain this area at collar height at least until adjustments with the surface drainage can be made. This area might be best suited as a chipping area due to the drainage concerns.

No. 6 Green

Drainage on the 6th green is also impacted by the organic matter in the profile and more so by the lack of natural air circulation. Completing the tree work required to gain the air movement may not be possible due to environmental restrictions. It is important to treat this green differently than the others in regards to water management. I would expect the green to be more susceptible to diseases as well because of the increased humidity and heat. Reducing the organic mat will even be more important to try to provide as much free drainage as possible. Future consideration will have to given to installing a fan on this site if the natural air circulation cannot be obtained and surface conditions deteriorate.

Practice Green

The practice putting green is performing well. Traffic is impacting the portion of the green closest to the pro shop. This is to be expected. Some of the hole locations on the green were also showing signs of wear injury from traffic. Core-cultivate this green at a standard spacing this summer. Developing a higher level of organic matter would actually improve the turf's wear tolerance. Continue to fertilize this green with higher levels of nitrogen (N) through the summer season to offset the traffic effects. A natural organic fertilizer would be well suited for the added N. The benefits of sand construction were noted during the visit with the firmer surface conditions. Hopefully, the aggressive modification practices in place for the other greens will develop surfaces more like this in the future.

TEES

Renovation

The renovation work completed on the 8th hole is a significant improvement to that hole. The surfaces will be leveled in the fall to correct some settling that occurred. Renovation work was also discussed for the 9th, 12th and 17th tees, which need to be leveled and perhaps expanded to provide more usable teeing space and in some cases additional length to the holes. I recommend removing a red maple tree from the left side of the 9th tee as part of that renovation project. The tree is showing some signs of internal decay and may be potentially hazardous. The back tee on the 12th hole should be enlarged and the middle tee brought to level to improve playing conditions there. Three maples trees should be removed from the left side of the 17th tee (front tee box) so that the back tee can be more fully utilized and the front tee expanded in that direction. The back tee should also be leveled so it can be more fully utilized. A machine like the Blecavator should be well suited to grade the crowned surfaces of the tees once the sod has been removed. The final grading work can be completed by the staff and tees reestablished with commercial bentgrass or short-cut Kentucky bluegrass sod.

FAIRWAYS

Topdressing/Cultivation Programs

The progress of the fairway topdressing continues to be impressive. The topdressing applications have created a 1" plus layer of sand at the surface of the fairways. The benefits of the sand are most noticeable in a wet season like this when the surfaces remain playable and maintainable in comparison to non-topdressed rough areas (i.e. #4 fairway). The sand topdressing practices in place are sound and no changes are recommended there.

It is also important to manage compaction in the soils. The sand layer will help to reduce the compaction. However, some form of shatter core cultivation is beneficial for the fairways. Equipping your fairway machine with solid tines is one effective means to complete the shatter core aeration. The Verti-Quake machine is also being used with success at several golf courses in the region and that too would provide an option for deeper aerification. This practice is slow to complete but creates minimal surface disruption. I cannot comment on the machine's ability to tolerate rocks. The AerWay implement might be another form of shatter core cultivation that can be used over the fairways. This may be slightly more disruptive but will tolerate rocky conditions and provide adequate penetration to aerify the upper 4" of the root zone.

The sand topdressing is probably most important in approach areas to the greens. A combination of hollow tine cultivation to remove thatch and native soils and replace

those with straight sand is the best means to firm those surfaces for improved bump-and-run shots to the greens.

Trees

Begin to remove trees from the left side of the 3rd hole to open up greater vistas of the golf course from the 3rd hole and clubhouse areas. The picture below illustrates the trees in question.



A planting of white pine trees should also be removed from the left of the 10th fairway. The tree stand that separates the 10th and 11th fairways should also be thinned to improve air circulation and light for the 10th fairway and to open up more views across the lower holes. Trees located on the left and right side of the 18th fairway should also be removed to reestablish more of the original site lines on the hole.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Sand Bunkers

I was impressed with the restoration work completed on holes #7 and #8. The new bunkers seem much more appropriate for the design of your golf course. Hopefully, that work can be continued.

Bentgrass Conversion

Bentgrass population in the fairways and on the putting greens continues to spread. The use of growth regulators has been helpful in the fairway conversion program. The cultural practices in place are also sound in that regard. Well done!

Bentgrass populations on putting greens will expand naturally as well with the cultural practices in place. This was most evident on greens that were shaded and now receive adequate levels of sun. The bentgrass populations have increased dramatically on those sites and should continue to do so. The use of the growth regulator Trimmit (paclobutrazol) on the putting greens is an option that can be considered. However, the applications will be more effective after the bentgrass populations begin to dominate the surfaces and there is less annual bluegrass in place. Light rates of Trimmit (2-4 oz/A) can be applied as a trial initially and heavier application rates (6-8 oz.) made in early September. The late summer application targets the annual bluegrass when it is at its strongest and most competitive growth phase and any discoloration created will likely be less of a concern to the membership.

CONCLUSION

The golf course has had a good season. I commend Mr. Stachowicz and his staff for their work in what has been a fairly difficult season. The programs in place are very sound and should develop ideal playing conditions and restore the golf course closer to its original design theme. With continued patience, the fairway topdressing and green restoration programs will proceed and will pay off long-term benefits to the membership.

Do not hesitate to contact the office if any questions arise during the remainder of the season or if there are any questions regarding this report. Best wishes for the remainder of the summer.

Sincerely,



James E. Skorulski, Senior Agronomist
Northeast Region Green Section

JES/jc

cc: Mr. Michael W. Stachowicz, Superintendent
Ms. Kristen Stewart, Green Chairman
Mr. Ben Dawson, President

