
TO

PYECOMBE GOLF CLUB

**AGRONOMY REPORT ON
THE GOLF COURSE**

MARCH 2017

DAVID STANSFIELD LTD.

GOLF COURSE AGRONOMY

**1 Derwent Court
Silsden BD20 0QR
UK**

**Office +44 (0) 1535 656849
Mobile +44 (0) 7774 152701
E-mail agronomist1@outlook.com**

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UK**

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Inspection date – 1 March 2017

1.0 PRESENT

- 1.1 The course was inspected with Duncan Scott, Simon Wells and Stephen Milner.
- 1.2 Matters arising were discussed with David Leach, Annie Prior and Matt Bolton.

2.0 BRIEF

- 2.1 To carry out a review of course condition and resources for maintenance.
- 2.2 To comment on findings and make recommendations for future action.

3.0 SUMMARY

- 3.1 A review at the low point in the annual cycle concluded the Club is achieving a positive result in bringing out the best of the Pyecombe course. At this stage, further improvements in week by week playability are more likely to be achieved through changes to how and when individual operations are carried out, rather than any fundamental changes to the programme itself.
- 3.2 The site as a whole looked well and was neatly presented, with a low level of general wear and tear, despite this being a popular winter course. Special problems with, e.g. badgers and deer are being handled imaginatively. Indeed, the management of the ecology of the course is excellent, fully meriting the award received in 2016.
- 3.3 The putting surfaces were to a good standard for 1st March, with very little scarring due to winter disease. This low level of Fusarium activity is an excellent success, given the average condition of putting surfaces countrywide at present. And this has been achieved with only a low input of fungicide. Collars and aprons were somewhat smoother and more uniform than in 2015.
- 3.4 Renovation of the green and surround at the 16th has been quite a success too. Adjustments to the putting surface and approach at the 17th are now in planning, along with new tees to the right.
- 3.5 Tee improvements at the 9th have come out well, as has general clearance to improve the teesite at the 6th. Inevitably, the winter tees were looking rather worn, but summer tees seen were in satisfactory condition.
- 3.6 A number of fairways were a degree thinner than expected, with significant moss, e.g. the 6th. However, the turf was expected to respond quickly to a one-off boost with fertiliser, so long as this is backed up with a return to routine annual

vertidrainage. Local areas of bird damage have been sprayed with insecticide, e.g. at 2nd and 14th.

- 3.7 The rough has been cleared for the winter and was close cut throughout. So it was not possible to assess the results of Rescue treatments to thin out coarse grasses. Nevertheless, it was reported thick sections of rough were exceptional last summer and the possibility of a repetition in coming weeks is a point of concern.
- 3.8 Positive woodland management continues with success, benefitting both the ecology of the course and its playability. Especially valuable tree clearance has been carried out at the 4th and 7th, restoring width.

4.0 GREENS SURVEY

- 4.1 The turf on putting surfaces had a good density, with a moderate to low vigour, as should be the case at the end of winter. Where vigour was lowest and the putting surfaces were becoming yellow, it was the Meadowgrass content that was losing colour. All greens other than the water-collecting 9th were nicely firm underfoot. Ball roll was satisfactory; just slightly bobbly.
- 4.2 Although overseeding with Fescues has continued since my 2015 visit, my impression was there has not been any further increase in these species in most cases. The one exception is the 12th. The Fescues reported last time are still there, but in the interim the main increase has been in the percentage of Bentgrass. This suggests the input of nitrogen has been too high for the Fescues to compete and this is a point for adjustment in coming weeks.
- 4.3 Disease damage due to winter Fusarium was remarkably low, which is a good success from the Integrated Pest Management programme. There was no lingering damage from Anthracnose. Neither were there signs of insect pests nor worm casting.
- 4.4 Beneath grass cover, thatch depth continues to be under positive control, in the range 10-15 mm, mostly at the low end. I noted good incorporation of top dressing into the thatch and a low level of water retention (other than at the 9th and 10th, as expected).
- 4.5 There was no evidence of any soil compaction in the upper rootzone. Deeper down, penetrometer measurements gave variable results within and between greens, from a low 30 Bars (excellent) to a high 65 Bars (too hard). On balance, deep-seated soil compaction still needs treatment.

5.0 GREENS ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The Pyecombe greens have wintered better than most and they continue to respond well to the annual management plan. As such, the focus for discussion was on what adjustments might be made to achieve optimum playability for more weeks of the year, given the Club's concerns over slow spring re-growth and the interruption to summer play caused by the August treatment week.
- 5.2 The most obvious operation affecting the greens at these key times involves aeration in various forms, particularly vertidrainage. Nevertheless, the August vertidrain operation to 25 cm with 10⁰ lift, using 12 mm diameter pins, is absolutely fundamental to the success of the annual management plan as a whole. Findings on the day suggested spring vertidrainage continues to be important too, and must be carried out to a depth that will reach and pass through

the compacted layers found at 15-20 cm. Therefore, using smaller, neater, 8 mm diameter pins is not an option; these are neither strong nor long enough. However, if it helps it should be possible in future to move spring work away from April, bringing this forward to February or March. Then and now, use 12 mm dia. pins with 5° lift. Help to close the holes quicker by 8 mm pencil tining with the Aercore as a follow-up, and then rolling. For the current year you can then finalise matters by top dressing, but if you move vertidrainage back into the early months of the year, top dressing must be delayed until April.

5.3 I do not see a need for hollow tining, Drill and Fill or Graden operations this year. But to avoid hollow tining and Graden operations for the future the Club needs a better routine pencil tining plan, carrying out the work effectively and unobtrusively on a consistent basis at, say 2-3 week intervals Oct-Feb and perhaps monthly during the rest of the year. When treatments are being carried out monthly, it can be interspersed with Sarrel rolling. The objective is to keep the turf perforated, providing maximum air circulation, and give best potential for using the Turf Iron without problems. To be able to pencil tine reliably at such a frequency you need to replace the 15-year old Aercore with a new, pedestrian-operated Toro Procure. A pedestrian-operated machine may seem a step backwards, but it is quick, the effects are unobtrusive, there are no tractor wheel marks and it can be used much more reliably, regardless of weather and ground conditions.

5.4 The fertiliser plan is important in getting the turf moving in spring, to recover winter damage. At the same time, if the Club is to build up a good population of Fescues in the greens to the best advantage of year-round play, with least disease and least winter die-back, nitrogen input needs to be something in the order of 70-90 kg/ha per year, rather than the 147 kg/ha per year applied in 2016. As a framework of a fertiliser plan in 2017 my suggestion is:

- To apply 3.0.3 Turf Tonic or similar at the earliest opportunity in March, in frost-free weather, at 35 g/m².
- 3-4 weeks later apply the main spring fertiliser dressing, e.g. Sustane 10.1.4 at 30 g/m².
- During the summer plan an application of 8.0.0 at 25 g/m² at the time of the August treatment week. Between the spring application and Aug apply nitrogen-only liquid fertiliser on 2-3 occasions or one further application of 8.0.0 at the 25 g/m² rate.
- If the greens need a boost in September, e.g. if Anthracnose is prevalent, use 5.2.10 Sustane at 20 g/m².

Continue to use Compost Tea as a top-up and soil conditioner.

If the greens need additional input in the winter to maintain colour and density, use Go-Green Plus on 1-2 occasions.

5.5 I strongly recommend overseeding is ongoing, inputting Fescues on three occasions. If the putting surfaces are better when you roll after seeding use the Turf Iron.

5.6 100 tonnes is a good input of top dressing per year. But away from the renovation periods in April and August this will be better applied on a frequent, little and often, basis for maximum effect, e.g. every 2-3 weeks. To be able to do this the Club will need a better top dressing spreader, such as the Propass or

Dakota. This type of machine enables top dressing to be applied and worked in in 2-3 hours, rather than 1-2 days.

5.7 Although immediate funding of the aeration and top dressing equipment mentioned above may not be possible, I strongly recommend the Club has demonstrations this year to see what the machines indicated can do and encourage you to plan their purchase going forward. It is only by applying treatments with better equipment, more efficiently, can you expect to make the greens better for longer, as has been the case following the purchase of new pedestrian-operated greens' mowers since my visit in 2015.

5.8 As to other items:

- I did not see a need for more Rescue treatments to remove Perennial Ryegrass from putting surfaces at this stage.
- I advised against using the Turf Iron when the greens are wet on top. In drier circumstances though it can be applied frequently, routinely as often as 2-3 times per week if needed. 4 passes in ideal circumstances is the absolute maximum
- The Club highlighted a wet spot towards the margin of the 16th green. The problem here is water trapped in the turf. I advised thorough perforation and working in of Zeolite. Repeat if needed once the grass cover has filled in.
- I do not see a need to apply Phosphite in summer. Instead, add carbohydrates to the Compost Tea, Jun-Oct, if the greens struggle in hot, dry weather.
- I suggest the Compost Tea is fungus-dominated, rather than bacteria-dominated.

6.0 GREEN RENOVATION

6.1 Following on from the success of reshaping the 16th green, the Club reported a plan to modify the 17th by lowering the run-up and lifting the putting surface to the front/right to create additional pin positions.

6.2 The main point for attention on the approach is to lift the turf and remove the topsoil through a sufficiently large area so the new contours can blend in subtly. You do not want a ditch in front of the putting surface.

6.3 As to modifying the putting surface itself, if just part of the green is to be lifted the new makeup must be as similar as possible to what remains in place, for consistency of effect from treatments applied. A sample of the existing rootzone was collected for lab tests; the results are attached. Although this may not be technically ideal for modern green construction, I see no issues arising from putting it back unameliorated, and I expect there will be enough to provide a minimum 20 cm firmed depth to cover the fill material imported from the approach. The mix is not likely to suffer excess compaction problems ($D_{90/10} = 5.1$), the fines content is modest, and the organic matter content is good.

6.4 When re-contouring the putting surface, allow for some fall for run-off of surface water. Also, put in a perimeter drain as the soil on this part of the course tends to be quite clayey and will be easily compacted when it is moved.

7.0 FAIRWAYS

- 7.1** To boost density of cover for the short term I advised an application of 46.0.0 soluble urea at, say 30 kg/ha. This can be tank mixed with iron sulphate to knock back moss.
- 7.2** Longer term, I strongly recommend going back to annual vertidrain treatments. This will be much more effective than basic slitting in keeping the soil and turf in a healthy condition.

8.0 ROUGH

- 8.1** Changing the course from wall to wall semi-rough height grass to holes defined by unmown rough in the summer has been a positive step in the presentation of the Pyecombe course. However, the uncut rough can become too thick: where there are zones of coarse grass; and in years of exceptional growth, as in 2016; causing slow play and lost balls. Treatment for coarse grass using Rescue is reported to have been positive.
- 8.2** With respect of problems in years of exceptional growth, it is impossible to say how much rough there will be in the spring and summer from year to year. How well it will re-grow during coming weeks will depend upon the weather in April and May. If it is dry and cool, the rough may not grow at all this year. If on the other hand it is warm and wet, there will be a lot. How should the Club best prepare for this?
- 8.3** Good equipment for cutting and clearing the rough, even if second-hand, is expensive and is something you may only need one per year, if at all, and for just sections of the course. Hence, rather than buy an Amazon to deal with this issue my suggestion was that from May onwards the Club monitors zones where balls can easily be lost, even after a well-struck shot, and if it appears there may be an issue, get in early with a hired machine.

9.0 OTHER AREAS

- 9.1** No new points were made concerning tees or bunkers.

10.0 NEXT VISIT

- 10.1** The scheduled date for the next review is summer 2018, subject to confirmation. But if I can be of further help in any way in the meantime I hope the Club will be in touch.

D M STANSFIELD
6 March 2017

Analysis Results (SOIL)

Customer DAVID STANSFIELD LTD

Distributor DAVID STANSFIELD LTD
1 DERWENT COURT
SILSDEN
BD20 0QR

Sample Ref PYECOMBE 17G

Date Received 06/03/2017

Sample No E191881/01

Crop GRASS GROWTH

Analysis	Result	Guideline	Interpretation	Comments
Sand (%)	94.27			
Silt (%)	5.20			
Clay (%)	0.53			
SClass	Sand			
Very Fine Sand (%)	4.94			
Fine Sand (%)	19.47			
Medium Sand (%)	42.76			
Coarse Sand (%)	26.58			
Very Coarse Sand (%)	0.52			
Stones >2mm (%)	2.43			
Lime Req. (t/ha)	7.0			
Organic Matter DUMAS (%)	2.2	3.0	Slightly Low	Incorporate organic material when possible.

Additional Comments

Additional technical bulletins are available at www.lancrop.com

Please Note

Whilst every care is taken to ensure that the Results from Analysis are as accurate as possible, it is important to note that the analysis relates to the sample received by the laboratory, and is representative only of that sample. No warranty is given by the laboratory that the Results from Analysis relates to any part of a field or growing area not covered by the sample received. It is important to ensure that any soil, leaf, silage or fruitlet sample sent for analysis is representative of the area requiring analysis and that samples are obtained in accordance with established sampling techniques. A leaflet containing instructions on how to take soil, leaf, herbage, silage and fruit samples for analysis is available from the laboratory on request.

Analysis Results (SOIL)

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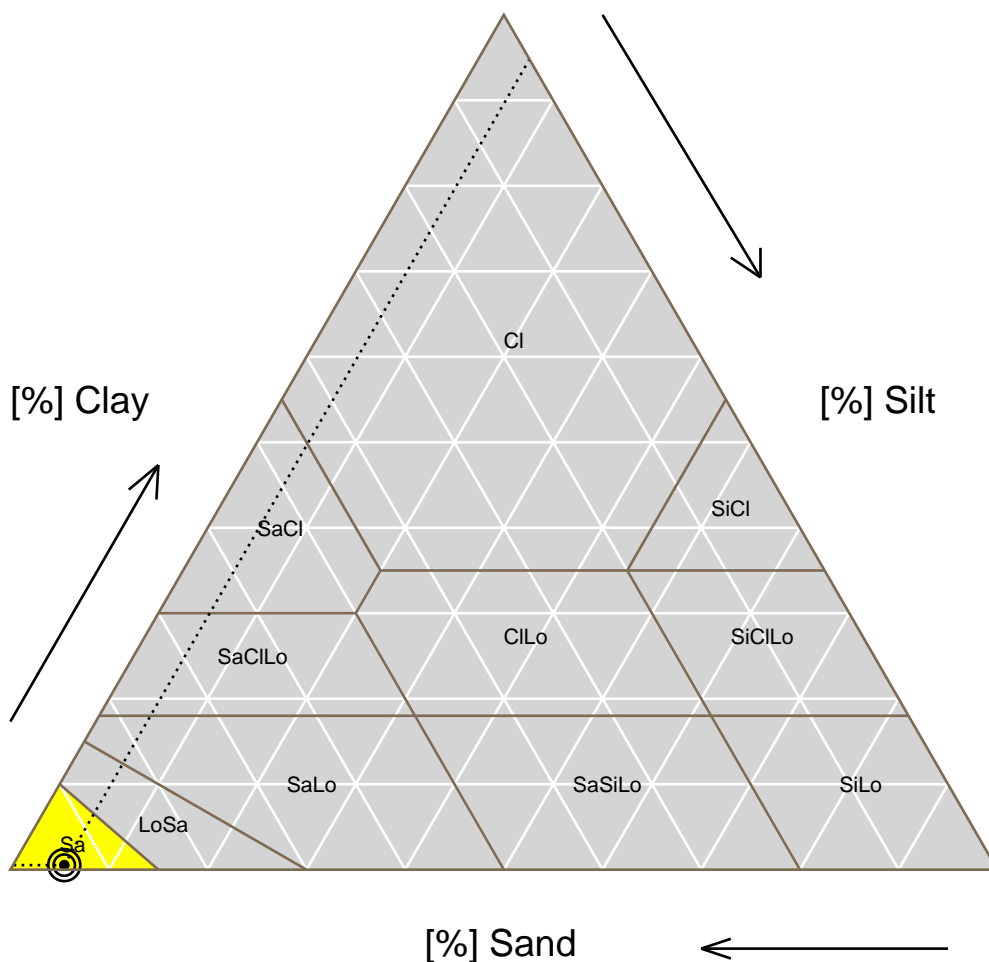
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Fine Sand	19.47
Medium Sand	42.76
Coarse Sand	26.58
Very Coarse Sand	0.52
Stones >2mm	2.43
Soil Type	Sa Sand

Property	Assessment
Available Water	Very Low to Low
Drainage Rate	Very Rapid
Inherent Fertility	Low
Potential C.E.C.	Low
Leaching Risk	High
Warming Rate	Rapid

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