

## BOLAND BOWLS

### GREENS MAINTENANCE NEWSLETTER: SEPTEMBER 2023

**Renovation:** Its that time of the year when we have to repair the damage that has been done to our greens during the season. The unusually heavy rains of the past few months have contributed quite a bit to this damage. So has the heavy traffic that some of our Clubs have experienced.

Most of you have developed a renovation programme which works for you. Most of you have also wisely delayed the date of renovation to later in the year when the soil has warmed up, the grass plant can start producing food for itself (carbohydrates) and the recovery time is so much shorter. And that means that your members won't have to wait too long before they can get back on to the green.

In September last year we sent out a newsletter regarding the annual renovation of greens. So we won't repeat the content. We would rather highlight some of the more important points to consider.

1. No matter how often you groomed and brushed you green, there will be a build up of **thatch**. You must remove all of this thatch by scarifying aggressively with your pin scarifier or verticutter. How do you know when you have taken off enough? When the members start complaining that you haven't left any grass on the green!  
Doc Louw, the guru of greenkeeping in South Africa, talks about over 100 wheelbarrows of grass/thatch that needs to be removed. Obviously conditions vary from one Club to another, but the message is still clear. Get rid of as much as you can.
2. The **brush** plays a critical role in the renovation process. It picks up all the grass cuttings and other litter caused by the scarification process. If you do not possess a brush, try to borrow one. A leaf-blower can also be of use. And if you have neither of these, then use a normal garden rotary mower and set it just above the surface to vacuum up the debris.
3. The closing of the green allows us to restore the **2m areas** which have been compacted over the year. This area must be aerated in some way or other, either by hollow tining or spiking. If the compaction in the 2m area is severe, and there is little grass, some Clubs use hand tines (10 – 15mm) to remove cores and allow air to get to the roots. These holes do not have to be filled. This is labour intensive (depending on how much of the margin has been badly worn) but gives new life to the grass plant.
4. And finally, what about the **levels**? The ideal time to take levels is immediately after the scarification process is complete. This will show you the high spots which can be scarified down, and the low spots which may need a little fill.

**Greens management:** This issue has come up before. But at a recent meeting in Paarl of the Greens Convenors in our three regions in the Boland, it was suggested that we mention the importance of this issue again.

Following on logically from the items under renovation above, there is the very important matter of managing play immediately after renovation. In all likelihood, the members will put pressure on the Committee and Greenkeeper to allow feet back on the green as soon as possible. And if an important event is scheduled for early in the new season, one will hear members talking about "walking the green in". This is fine for the centre of the green. But a lot of aeration, some replanting, and a layer of topdressing means that the 2m margins are still very unstable. Heavy traffic on these areas so soon after renovation will undo all the hard work. The margins will compact quickly and we'll be back to where we started. So it is vital that the Greenkeeper move the rinks and directions after each days play at this stage of the year.

And what about Greens Management for the rest of the year? Depending on the traffic on your green, you may like to consider some or most of the following recommendations. These are not only applied when there are signs of wear but right from the beginning of the season.

Tabs: Protect the area close to the ditch by

- stringing off the two or three metre area so that play takes place between the strings
- asking the Skips to change the position of the mat (how often is it reset on the 2m mark!)
- starting the new head where the last one ended
- picture framing the green. This means leaving the grass in the 2m area longer (single cutting or not cutting at all). This can apply throughout the season for all Tabs and social events.

Protect the central area by

- changing the direction of play on a regular basis
- increasing the number of rink options (for example, marking your ditchboard at 1.67 m intervals which allows you to make small changes each week)

Practice: And what about the influence of afternoon practice on your green? Do you also have members practising on the same rinks, in the same direction, every time they turn up at the Club? This also contributes greatly to the general wear and tear. At many Clubs the worn rink is the one closest to the front entrance of the Clubhouse!

To avoid overuse of certain rinks during practice, there are a few things one can do. If you have an outside notice board, you can indicate which rinks and directions are open for practice. Some Clubs use small notice boards on the green saying "This rink closed" or "Practice N-S" or "This green closed" if you are fortunate to have more than one green. Whatever system you use, the members eventually appreciate the efforts to maintain the condition of the green and fall into line.

All of the above involves the co-operation of the members. So it is advisable to share with them the reasons for introducing these measures.