



Course Newsletter Autumn 2008

Once again we have experienced another wet and dull summer, with some of the duller months ever recorded. As with last year grass growth has been frantic throughout the summer and the excessive growth, wet conditions and lack of drying days have made it very difficult to produce a good pace to the greens consistently. On a brighter note the constant growth has enabled the greenstaff to keep the course well presented with little or no bare areas even in some of the more heavily trafficked places.

We have recently had our annual visit from our agronomist a copy of which is available in both locker rooms. In general he felt the course was progressing well with improvements in most areas. One of his recommendations is the use of a new product which reduces the vigorous top growth and stimulates root growth of the grass plant

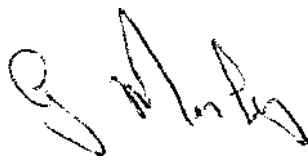
and has been used with some effect at other clubs to help maintain green speed through the day. As mentioned in past newsletters at certain periods in the year green speed starts to reduce as early as midday and for those playing late evening the speed can have reduced dramatically. We intend to try the product on a few greens early in the year and compare the results. If it is found that green speed is maintaining longer through the day it will be implemented across all greens. It is important to point out that this is not a 'speed in a bottle' product and will be used with all our other maintenance procedures aimed at the long term improvement of the green quality.

It was also pointed out the need to find alternatives in worm control. During last year the greenstaff used a sulphur based product on trial patches to try and acidify the top few

centimetres of soil therefore making it less attractive to worms. These trials will continue over the next couple of years to discover whether this practice will be effective at Stoke. The major problem we face is that worms prefer alkaline soils which as we have limestone close to the surface on most parts of the course may reduce the effectiveness of this practice. The acidification of the soil surface would be an ongoing operation and even if it proves successful may take a number of years to make a difference. The reason it is necessary to find an alternative to chemical control is because it is widely expected within the industry that all chemical worm controls will be withdrawn from use over the next few years.

Hopefully you will have seen the proposals for the construction work to be carried out on the 7th hole. This will start very soon when we will once again have our course architects on site to help and oversee the positioning of bunkers and the re-modelling of the pond. At the same time we will also look at preventing the path, leading from the 8th tee, from flooding during periods of heavy or prolonged rainfall. While this work is ongoing it will be necessary to close the 7th hole. The 8th hole will be played from markers at the bottom of the fairway and a small par 3 will be set up on the practice ground. The hole will only be closed when work is being carried out and is purely for the safety of staff.

Over the coming weeks it will be necessary to use the winter course and this will include the use of white lines, hoops, posts and rope. These are used to direct traffic and rest areas of high use in the main season. This can on some holes mean a little further to walk or take your buggy, but it would be appreciated if you could follow these small guidelines and help protect **your** course through the winter months.



G Morley Green Chairman



G Austin Head Greenkeeper