

THE NATURE OF THE GREENS AT PLEASINGTON GOLF CLUB

As members you are all too well aware that our greens are uneven, this in the main is down to the poa annua (annual meadow grass) that is lower than our present height of cut (6mm) and in fact it is lower than our summer height (4 mm)

At the moment the national green height of cut in the summer months is between 3 – 6mm, this is slightly higher in the winter months. One would think that the easiest way to produce quick greens is to cut the greens lower. However, this can actually have the reverse effect! By far the biggest impact on green speed is firmness of the putting surfaces, a good example of this is right now having the same winter cutting height but the green speed is quite good with them being on the dryer side.

Our golf greens can be managed to produce firm, true putting surfaces without the need to cut them down to excessively low heights. The routine treatments we employ are: light and frequent top dressing, light verti cutting treatments, a balanced minimal nutrient input, judicious use of irrigation and the use of light vibrating rollers.

The more “pressure” that is put on the greens, the more this will weaken the desirable grasses (bents & fescues) and allow more Poa Annua Grass to invade. This pressure mainly comes from excessive rounds of golf and low heights of cut. By low I mean constantly cutting below 4mm, therefore if the Greens staff have pressure put on them to reduce the height of cut this can actually, in the long run, lead to poorer and ultimately slower greens.

The disease management policy that was introduced in winter 2005-2006 has meant that the greens have little or no scars, but with the make up of our greens (poa annua dominated) the threat of fusarium is never too far away and can occur at any time of the year. However it is more commonly seen in the autumn and spring months, when the weather tends to be cooler and more humid.

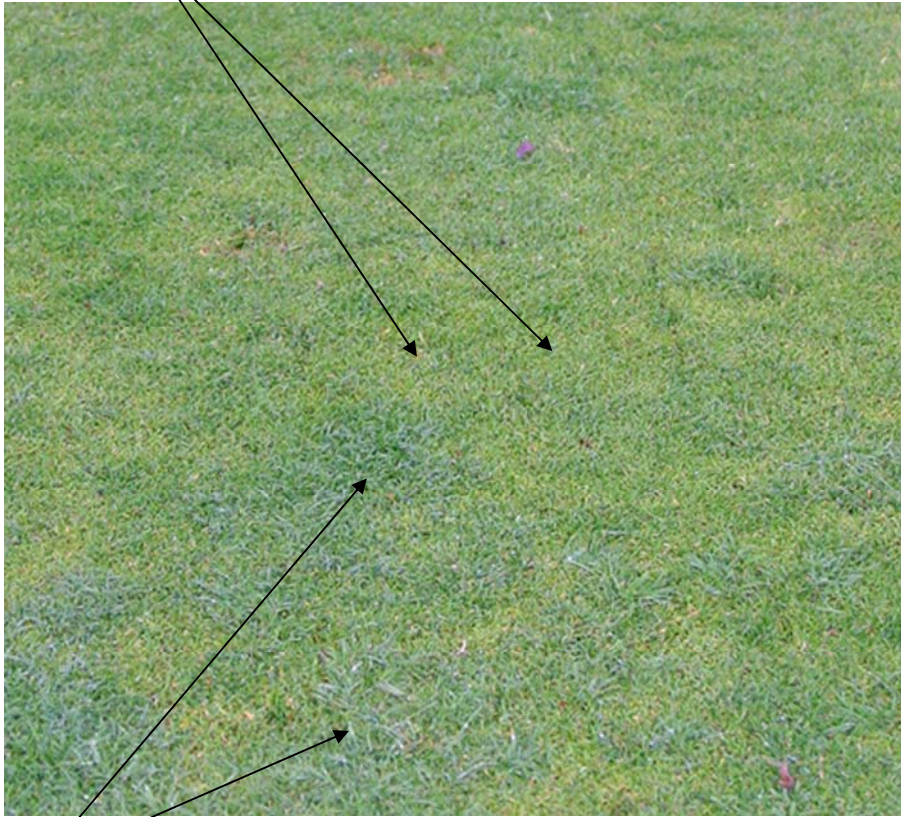
In addition the following are conducive to fusarium development:

- Excessive shade
- Excessive thatch
- Moist soil surfaces
- Poor air movement
- Excessive nitrogen
- Alkaline soils
- Too much irrigation

Referring to the above points these issues are being dealt with in many ways including, dew removal-every day in winter, tining-hollow and solid, lowering fertiliser inputs and tree management.

Pictured below is the right hand side of the 18th green

Poa annua (meadow grass)



Bent grass starting to colonise.

As you can clearly see the finer grasses are starting to move into the areas highlighted, the work of establishing the bent grasses is in its infancy though pleasing results are starting to appear.

For the foreseeable future this time of year is going to be difficult as we try to turn poa annua greens into bent & fescue dominated swards, there are no quick fixes available for what we are trying to achieve, but having the finer species of grass is the only true sustainable way forward for the greens at Pleasington.

Listed below are a few points about the benefits of having the finer grasses.

- Relatively low amounts of fertiliser required 60-100 kg/ha
- Good disease resistance e.g. fusarium patch
- Relatively slow growing.
- Very good drought tolerance.
- Fined leafed / thus increasing green speed

DARRON MATHER

COURSE MANAGER

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