



20<sup>th</sup> February 2018

# Gosford Golf Club

Course Report

Report prepared by: Martyn Black



PROJECT OVERVIEW	Gosford Golf Club Course Report Tuesday 20 <sup>th</sup> February 2018
IN ATTENDANCE	Mike Connors – Green Chairman David Nicholls – Course Superintendent Martyn Black – Golf NSW
INTRODUCTION	Full course review to discuss current condition and work practices to assess potential for course improvements.
OBSERVATIONS / CONSIDERATIONS	<p><b>Putting surfaces</b></p> <p>As with many courses in the middle of another long and difficult summer, the greens are under extreme stress.</p> <p>Gosford is in the unenviable position of being in a largely enclosed valley, which creates many “micro-climate” zones within the course. This situation pre-disposes many of the green sites to extra disease pressure which impacts on the health of the plant.</p> <p>The resultant shallow root system, coupled with the poor drainage and high sodium (salt) in the irrigation water, makes for very fragile turf during the summer months.</p> <p>The past few months, with very little natural rainfall will have led to a build of sodium; the fact that the club has only lost a very small area of its greens is testament to the dedication and ability of David Nicholls and his crew.</p> <p>It is understood that there is concern within some sections of the club that the greens are slow and soft as compared to other courses in the area; it should be noted that due to the aforementioned circumstances, attempts to increase green speed by accepted methods such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verti-cutting</li> <li>• Dusting</li> <li>• Excessive rolling</li> </ul> <p>Could lead to a further weakening of the turf and more turf loss.</p> <p>Consideration could be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving air flow to problem greens by removing vegetation which restricts North Easterly breeze.</li> <li>• Raising the 5<sup>th</sup> green 1.5m (major rebuild).</li> <li>• Lifting hollow in the middle of 17<sup>th</sup> green to improve surface drainage.</li> <li>• Root pruning surrounds of greens affected by nearby vegetation (this has already been carried out in several areas).</li> <li>• Continuation of existing greens programme whilst considering the implementation of Primo as a means to further “harden” the plant. NB David</li> </ul>

Nicholls is fully aware of this product and is best placed to make a decision on its use, perhaps after a trial on the nursery green.

### **Tees**

Most tees were in very good condition and those that were struggling in certain areas were invariably being impacted by nearby vegetation ie: root evasion and shade.

As for greens, any rationalization of the vegetation on tee surrounds will give the best chance for healthy turf; eg: root pruning of the rear of the 11<sup>th</sup> tee would be a worthwhile exercise to see if the current healthy turf survives longer into the winter.

### **Fairways**

The extreme drought of recent months sees many areas of fairways struggling to provide healthy turf.

The lack of sufficient water supply, and the fact that several fairways have no sprinkler system means that the current scenario in these areas is inevitable.

It is understood that there are plans to install irrigation into the 18<sup>th</sup> fairway later this year, this should be seen as a priority and will have the side benefit of root pruning the entire fairway in the process.

Consideration could be given to creating new plantings along the car park boundary at the approach areas of the 18<sup>th</sup> fairway to allow for future removal of several Swamp Mahogany trees, which are notorious for aggressive root systems. As a basic theory for future plantings and /or removal of trees so as to improve growing conditions for fairway turf, creating light "copses" rather than straight continual line planting will allow more sunlight onto the turf particularly on any East/West aligned fairways, these fairways in particular struggle as the Winter sun is blocked from the turf.

- All fairways would benefit from root pruning
- 1<sup>st</sup> fairway could have several "Brush Box" trees removed to create the aforementioned copse effect
- 6<sup>th</sup> fairway could be lifted in the area adjacent to the 7<sup>th</sup> tee to reduce the incidence of balls rolling into the bare, root affected area; the removal of the 4 Norfolk Island Hibiscus trees would help the turf in this high traffic areas and the use of thick mulch around the larger trees would create a more appealing finish. (Many clubs are using thick mulch under trees, where turf growth is impossible).
- The dish drain that crosses 10, 11 and 18<sup>th</sup> fairway was discussed at length and it is felt that the current situation is probably the best option.

### **Bunkers**

- Consideration could be given to creating grass swales at the rear of the 8<sup>th</sup> green, as the current 2 bunkers are very difficult to maintain.

	<p>The club has recently purchased 2 “bunker dry” drainage devices and are keen to install in the worst 2 bunkers on the course to assess their performance.</p> <p><b>General</b></p> <p>Consideration could be given to removing the Agapanthus in the garden areas on the RHS of 17<sup>th</sup> fairway to help speed up play while still retaining the shrubs as a screen from the dump pile.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was a desire to enlarge the front 12<sup>th</sup> tee to create a different option of a shorter shot; this could be seen as a worthwhile project and would be enhanced by the removal of some of the pines on the LHS to allow a better view of the LH bunker.</li> <li>• The club should consider its future planting theme regarding the landscape of the course ie: native or ornamental, as at present there is a mixture of themes throughout the course.</li> </ul> <p>It is generally accepted that native gardens are less time consuming to maintain, while retaining walls and hedges require more hours to keep looking good.</p>
<p>NOTES</p>	<p>In summary I will say that like many clubs suffering drought and inadequate water supplies, David Nicholls and his small team are providing the best surfaces possible given their resources and I wish all at Gosford the best for the future.</p>

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