



Fredericton Golf Club Superintendent Report: May 2020

Well the year 2020 has arrived, and quite the year it has been already!! I hope all have stayed safe and sound during the current Covid situation ongoing in the world. I must first start off by saying that the golf course has overwintered better than the previous few seasons, but not to be misunderstood there is still winter damage to some sections of the golf course here at FGC and as well around our local region. We got fooled by what seemed to be an early season with the weather, only a week later once we seeded (as per usual) it seems Mother Nature had another plan and right back into winter temperatures we went. Add a few things together like weather, some ice damage, and a smaller maintenance crew due to Covid-19, means we are a little behind schedule on what is normally expected come opening day.

Course:

Overall the Greens came through winter better than the last few years. That statement can only be taken lightly as there are some area's with damage on the course. Within the last few weeks we have seen some greens improve and some have gone backwards. The heat a few weeks ago helped wake up the Poa on the greens, than the cold shut the Poa down. The bentgrass on the greens can handle that, Poa on the other hand can not take that type of pressure. This is a reason our 4 new greens were seeded to bentgrass, in which I will get into detail further in this report. This being said even with the damage I'm happy with how the greens handled winter, and constantly remind myself that this property is much older than the competition courses around us. So trying to compare one to the other is something that I try to avoid.

Recovery – Currently as I sit here, with staff putting tarps down almost the middle of May on a thin layer of snow, the soil temperatures sit below 10 degrees. The turf/seed that was applied to the greens to help recover usually need a good 13-15 degree soil temperatures. Looking long range it looks like Mother Nature will help us, but I feel we have been looking at the long range for 2 months now and it hasn't been right once! The greens to this point have been deep tined (11 Inches depth), hollow tined (pulled plugs at 4 inches depth), vertical mowed, overseeded and topdressed. The weather has not been there to germinate the seed, but within the coming days with some weather we should see some germination.

Greens such as #3 and 7 came out as two of our best greens this winter with very minimal damage. This shows that with select tree removal, the constant deep tining and aerating are starting to pay off in those locations. It takes time but it is nice to start seeing some results.

Approaches and Fairways seemed to handle winter very well and are in good shape, just a little soggy.

There was some ice damage on few tees, currently those areas are under repair.

New greens:

The greens on the 4 new sites wintered very well, only thing is they are very soft. We are trying our hardest to firm these greens up, but it needs to be understood that these new greens are a work in progress for another year or so. Nothing major, but you may notice these greens have a little more sand on them during season, may be firmer some days than others and softer on other days. You might notice extra clippings (cut grass) on your ball along with excess sand. This is due to us trying to build a thatch layer (layer of dead and living shoots, stems and roots between the leaf blades and the soil. This layer helps firm these greens up and makes the play ability consistent. There will also be a lot more fertilizer applied to these greens throughout summer.

The surrounds/approaches on the other hand didn't handle winter as well, as there is some thinning in those areas. The surrounds will be overseeded as many times as needed this season to help fill in the holes.

The Bunkers also wintered pretty well, but some of our faces collapsed in. When we open you might see some tarps on the faces to help prevent washouts and establish some germination of seed. Once the faces are established the felt/tarp will be removed.

As I mention felt I must assure you all that no felt will be used in the new bunkers. The bunkers were seeded and rooted, we will now burn the grass to kill the plant and then will add sand to the traps. The bunkers will need a few weeks to settle the new sand once we get opened.

Suggestions/Helpful tips for when we open:

FIRST THING: Ballmarks, just a friendly reminder to repair your ballmarks, especially on the 4 new greens. Improper repair can cause significant damage on the new greens. If you happen to leave a ballmark in a winter recovery area, please just remove your ball and leave that repair for us!

Roped area's on greens and tees are there for a reason, meaning that we are trying to grow grass there. I know I say this every year, but just a friendly reminder if you want turf there by mid-June, stay off it.

A few tee decks have some ice damage so there might be use of temporary tee decks for a week or so.

There are new forward tees being cut down, these are going to be work in projects. Areas in the fairways and rough will not be roped off, as per usual I just ask you try to avoid driving or walking on them.

There is a possibility (key word) of a temp green or 2 for a week depending on weather conditions come opening week.

Just a reminder that greens will be a little longer/slower for the first week as usual as we try to still bounce back from winter. It may take some time to get the new greens running at the same speed as our old greens.

Covid-19 Restrictions/Reminders

- No ball washers, rakes, benches and water cooler
- Pool noodle in hole below the rim

- On course bathrooms open (Will be cleaned regularly; supplies will be ready for members to use before and after if they feel the need)
- No bulk scorecards or pencils (If you would like to arrange to receive a personal amount for your bag let us know)
- No rakes – please use foot/club to make your best effort to repair
- Flags stay in (NO TOUCH POLICY)
- 2 foot gimmies encouraged or as group decides
- No sand and seed replacement stations or on course
- All pins, flags and tee markers will be disinfected every morning

Golf Course Projects:

At this point we have no current projects in the plans for the 2020 Golf season. That being said we have a few projects that still need to be completed:

The ditch on 8 that was dug last fall is seeded but will still need to be germinate. It will be roped off with some pathways to cross.

We are scalping down areas in the rough for forward tees. No construction on these, but we will be aerating and topdressing a few times for the next month.

Course clean-up is being done by FGC staff this year. I thank everyone who offered to lend a helping hand, but due to restrictions we were not able to schedule a clean-up day. With the bulk of my staff just starting we have started clean up, but also with the late start we have to get the course ready. Please be patient as the tree lines may seem messy for a week or so.

The new greens will continue to be a work in progress, nothing major but a lot more topdressing and seeding applications. You might see the roller or mower on it at various time of the day.

Staff and Safety:

With the uncertain outlook for golf courses during March and April, we here at FGC took precaution in bringing in staff to begin the season. For those two months our staff size was down to 1 being trained as a mechanic (Brian Gilbride) and

myself. Let's just say it was nearly impossible to do what normally gets done on the property during the month of April with such limited man hours. Thus is why we are a little behind this season. I hope many of you understand that we were affected here as well as many of you at home, as my staff has only increased in size about two weeks ago. That being said I am happy to say that I have currently no new hires and our staff consists of all the familiar faces you seen around the golf course last season. This should help make the catch up of what we fell behind on go by a little quicker as not as much training is needed.

We have spent the last month trying to prepare for the safety of you the golfer on the property, as long with the safety of my staff. The staff has been trained and we have constant meetings updating guidelines for us to follow. I can train my staff all I want, but I also need you the golfers to respect the distancing from them. You can still be friendly and the staff will still interact as per normal, but if they are placed in a situation where they are uncomfortable, I will be informed. We need to protect our staff at all causes here at FGC, and if one staff tests positive right now, I could be two weeks with a staff at home isolating after to being exposed to them. This course and/or any course can not afford to go without staff for 14 days at any part of the golf season. So, all I ask is respect the rules, let us handle and clean the course equipment and just enjoy getting out for a round of golf!!!!

I know once the announcement came out announcing we could open; everyone was ready to jump at the occasion and start playing immediately. I don't delay opening or pick a date by throwing darts at a board, there is a lot of thought that goes into these decisions. Looking at a green from a distance can be very misleading, especially if we have sprayed them and there is a green dye that makes them look like mid-July Greens. It is when you stand on them you get a better visual, albeit I'm not encouraging anyone to go on our greens right now (please don't) and just take our word for it. If we open too early the areas that are damage can end up sitting thin and half dead well into July. If we give them a couple extra days it could only take to mid-June the latest. It is a tough decision, and I hear negativity about later opening dates, but not as much negativity as when July 1 comes around and the damaged areas are still recovering. Just trying to give the absolute best conditions for when the season is well underway.

Thanks,

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Superintendent

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