

## **BOLAND BOWLS**

### **GREENS MAINTENANCE NEWSLETTER JUNE 2023**

#### **Winter tasks**

For most of us, the fertilising and irrigating of our greens has come to a stop. For some of us, the hectic programme of Club and Boland events and competitions may have slowed down. This gives us the time and opportunity to carry out a number of other tasks not part of our normal busy programme. Here are some reminders.

#### **Soil samples**

Take a number of samples (say 5) from your green, one in the middle and one about three metres in from each corner. Take these early in the morning, put them in a plastic bag and keep them cool while sending them off to a laboratory for analysis. Among the results you should receive are the following:

- The pH ; the ideal value for our turf grasses should be between 5.5 and 6.5
- The balance of the macronutrients N, P and K
- The Cation Exchange Capacity (CEC) which indicates the ability of your green's soil to retain nutrients and moisture

This feedback will allow you to rectify the situation in each case. Ways of doing this will be discussed in a later newsletter.

While removing these cores for analysis, you might as well take note of the following:

- how thick is the thatch on top? If close to 10 mm, you will have to scarify the green quite severely during renovation
- is there compaction? Is the compaction close to the surface, or deeper down? One expects compaction in the top 25 – 40 mm because of the traffic of man and machines. If the compaction is lower down, one would have to consider vertidrainage during your renovation period.
- Measure the length of your grass plant roots. This will, to a certain extent, be dependent on the compaction factor and your irrigation programme. Roots of 50 mm plus are acceptable but the longer the roots, the better the chances of the grass plant surviving any challenges.

#### **Take levels**

The heavy summer traffic on the green together with the heavy rains of the past few weeks will have affected your levels. Compaction in the two metre area may also have led to severe run-off along some margins. The results of taking levels may require you to lift or re-align your ditchboards. When the soil starts to warm up later in the year, you will be able to topdress the two metre areas to the level of the raised ditchboards.

#### **Banks and ditches**

For those of us who have grass banks, the season will definitely have affected our banks. Undercut or grassless sections need to be replaced. Very low banks can be built up. Later in the year, the top of the banks can be topdressed to achieve that sharp edge.

Where your ditches are too narrow (less than 200 mm), this is a good time to correct by shaving the grass bank or moving the ditchboards inwards. This is a labour-intensive operation, but well worth it in the long run.

Regardless of the width of your green, this may be a good time to align your ditchboards which could have moved out of line during the year. When doing this, consider sloping the ditchboard inwards (at an angle between 15° and 30°) towards the bank. This will provide better stability and resist the force of those bowlers who inadvertently step on the ditchboard.

**Foreign grasses**

Kikuyu grass from our banks has a tendency to invade at the margins. The moist turf at this time of the year makes it slightly easier to remove the grass by weeding. If there is a large patch of foreign grass you might have to remove a number of sods and replant.

**Rink markers**

If your rinks are showing signs of wear, it may be because you have a limited number of rink positions.

Quite a number of South African Clubs mark their rinks at 1.67 m intervals, giving them colours such as red, blue, green.

If these rinks are moved each week, it means that only after three weeks does play return to the same rink. It really is a good way to reduce the wear and tear and the grooves that tend to form when play takes place too often on the same 5m strip.

**Equipment**

One needs not to be reminded that this is also a good time to arrange for your greens equipment (mowers, groomers, brushes etc) to be serviced and rink markers and numbers to be painted or replaced.