

BOLAND BOWLS

GREENS MAINTENANCE NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2023

Levels

I know we have been hammering on about the issue of levels on our greens, but our visits to greens around the Boland have shown that very few Clubs are able to provide recent levels carried out according to the recommended Cubitt system.

Variations in the levels on a green can have an enormous impact on the reliability of the draw, especially on a fast green. Yet very few Club Greenkeepers know whether their greens are level or not. I believe that in the days when municipalities were responsible for the maintenance of greens, accurate levels were taken **every year** at renovation time! Since Clubs throughout the country have had to fend for themselves these days, the taking of levels has happened randomly at best.

The Cubitt System allocates a score for levels out of 30 points. This is then reduced to a score out of 20 points for inclusion in the overall rating of a Club's greens out of 100. A score of 24+/30 is considered very good. Scores in excess of 18 are still acceptable. Of the few greens in the Boland for which levels have been determined, most score 11/30 or less. So there does appear to be a problem.

Many of the Greenkeepers – and players – in our District are aware of the variation in levels on their own greens and those that they play on during competitions. Yet they are content to make allowances for this. What we are encouraging is that, with relatively little effort, levels can be taken and most of the inconsistencies ironed out.

Each club should have a level profile of their greens. The taking of levels using the Cubitt System is carefully explained in the Level 1 Greenkeeping Booklet. You may be fortunate to have someone with surveying experience who can do this for you. But if not, it really is a simple exercise. All you need is a Dumpy and measuring staff, a length of string marked off at 2m intervals, two 2m sticks and a team of five willing members (one reads the levels, one records, one holds the staff and two move the string as one proceeds across the green).

The Cubitt system allows for a variation of 4mm either way. Any reading more than or less than 4mm from the average is shown as an inconsistency. A difference of 4mm either up or down is not going to have much of an effect on the running of the bowl. These differences are negligible. But when, in the central part of the green, you have larger differences between readings, the running of the bowl WILL be influenced.

The following are a set of readings from two of our Clubs. The readings are adjacent to each other (ie 2m apart).

<u>Club A</u>	<u>Readings</u>	<u>Difference</u>	<u>Club B</u>	<u>Readings</u>	<u>Difference</u>
	-6, +22	28 mm		-15, +3	18 mm
	-20, -2	18 mm		-17, +4	21 mm
	-15, 0	15 mm		-6, +10	16 mm

A variation of almost 3 cm over a distance of 2 m (as reflected above) MUST have a huge effect on the running of the bowl. A slow, grassy green may disguise these differences to a certain degree, but imagine the effect of a thumb's width deviation on a hard green!

All of us expect, and will experience, deviations close to the ditchboards. Heavy traffic over the season will compact the turf and ultimately cause run off. These areas can be topdressed progressively over the years (remember not to exceed 10mm of topdressing per season).

Finally, if your readings along one side of the green are significantly higher than the opposite side, don't panic and try to fill up to the higher level. It is acceptable to have a difference from one side to the opposite side of up to 40 mm. A variation of 40 mm over a distance of 38 m is likely to have little effect.

If you need assistance with levels, please contact the Greens Convenor in your region (Stoffel, Lampies, Fred or myself).