

Introduction:

I am sure that I am not alone when I say this, "I cannot believe that we are in our 7th week of lockdown!"

This is honestly the last thing I would have ever contemplated happening to us. That being said, when we are faced with a unique set of circumstances we have to adapt and do the best we can. Our aim with this document is to give all of our members an idea of what has been happening on the Golf Course for the duration of lockdown and to also give our members an idea of what to expect once we re-open.

Working requirements during Lockdown:

Due to the lockdown restrictions we have had to operate under some strict guidelines. The most problematic of which, has certainly been that we are only allowed to have 15% of our work force on site at any given stage, which in our situation equals 3 employees. For that reason we have had to focus our maintenance on the following areas, in order of priority.

1. Greens
 - a. Greens mowing
 - b. Greens fertilizing.
 - c. Greens disease and pest management
 - d. Greens irrigation
2. Tee boxes
 - a. Mowing
 - b. Irrigation
3. Fairways
 - a. Mowing
 - b. Irrigation
4. Rough mowing
 - a. Mowing
5. Machinery Maintenance

It should be evident at this stage that the amount of maintenance required versus the amount of staff that is available is just not enough, especially when you consider the nature of the fast growing grasses that we have in South Africa.

In certain parts of the Northern Hemisphere where golf courses use mainly cool season grasses, the current situation would be far easier to deal with. Unfortunately that is not our reality.

So, how we have we managed Golf Course Maintenance during the past 6 weeks given these circumstances.

In short, we have done very well. Let me explain.

Greens:



Greens at present are very healthy and are enjoying the respite from all of the heavy foot traffic they have grown accustomed to. Our current height of cut is 5mm, as opposed to the regular height of 3.5mm. This has been done as our mowing frequency has been reduced due to labour restrictions and would be damaged if we did not increase the height of cut.

Once some of the lockdown restrictions have been lifted, we will increase our mowing frequency, commence greens rolling, incorporate sand dusting and bring the height of cut back down to 3.5mm for winter play.

The time required for getting the greens back to their normal pace? 2-3 weeks.

Tee boxes and Fairways:



Both of these areas are in great condition and there is barely a divot on site. Current height of cut is 15mm as opposed to the regular height of cut that ranges from between 10-12mm. This increase in height will be barely noticeable once we re-open and you will all be pleasantly surprised at just how good these areas look once we re-open.

Rough:



As the title suggests... it is going to be rough!!! The best that we have managed under the current restrictions is to mow the rough once per week. Due to that frequency we have had to increase the height of cut from 50mm- 85mm. If we tried to mow it any shorter with the current mowing frequency, it will damage the fast mowing rough and recovery might not be possible before the winter sets in.

In the coming weeks, we will be tweaking our already tight mowing schedule to incorporate a slightly lower height of cut around the greens. This will make life a lot easier for all golfers (especially those with a dodgy short game) as you do not want to be fluffing chip shots from next to the greens once we re-open. As for the other rough areas, once we re-open, the mowing of rough will be our primary concern and we will lower the heights as quickly as possible. How long will this take? My best guess would be around 2-4 weeks.

In closing:

Please rest assured that the golf course is in great health and eagerly awaiting your arrival. Just be prepared for the following

- Greens will be a little slower.
- Tee boxes and fairways will be great.
- Rough will be challenging.
- Garden beds, weeds and out of play areas. These areas will need to be neatened up once we return to work. That being said, it will not take more than a week or two to get these areas to an acceptable standard once we have re-opened.