Links Report – June 13, 2025

It has been a very busy, somewhat challenging, but productive past month for the Rivershore Links Crew. Tournament season is upon us, which is a great revenue generator for the organization, but can handcuff grounds maintenance efforts somewhat as well in terms of time spent on course completing maintenance tasks, facilitating split tee starts, and completing some of the detail work that is difficult to accomplish when the course is completely packed during a tournament. In terms of other challenges which we have faced recently, the irrigation system has been an issue – specifically, the intake for our pump house wet well, which is located near the tee boxes on Hole 10 (more information on this topic to follow). Along with that issue, the spring landscaping project, which has improved aesthetics to the exterior of our clubhouse area, has also created some issues/more work for the Links Crew in terms of repairing damaged irrigation from the Lyons landscaping team, and hand-watering these areas to keep the grass alive while we work through the irrigation repairs. Recently I have been in contact with the Lyons crew and will be working towards some solutions in this regard. I will have more information on those in next month's report.

In more positive news, Rivershore successfully hosted the Golf Canada University/College Championship last week – and the crew all started (extra) early to ensure that event would go as smoothly as possible. I would like to publicly thank the entire Links Crew for putting in a great team effort & presenting our Club in a positive manner while we hosted this national tournament – if you see them out there in the coming weeks, please don't hesitate to thank them for all their hard work presenting the golf course to the Golf Canada athletes, as positive feedback from both our members & greens fee golfers goes a long way in improving crew moral.

Irrigation

As previously mentioned, the irrigation system has been a challenge this past month. When the course was constructed in 1980, the gravity-fed wet well intake pipe was installed in our irrigation water holding pond in between Holes 10 & 11 (also extends to Holes 8 & 16). The location that this intake was installed in 1980 is questionable at best – as it is located in approximately 5-6 feet of water, near the edge of the pond, rather than in a deeper/more central location in the pond (pond is approximately 12-15 feet deep in some areas in the middle). This pipe is made of corrugated PVC and is 22" in diameter. As it is

gravity-fed, it has relatively low amounts of suction. This intake pipe fills our pump house wet well, which is then drawn up but our three (3) pumps (one small jockey & two larger VFD pumps) that work together to keep the system pressurized at ~110psi order to irrigate the golf course effectively. This wet well intake is open-ended – that is, there is no filter/screen installed at the end of the 22" corrugated pipe. The issue that we ran into this past month was an excess of plant material (mostly milfoil) growing on the bottom of the pond immediately in front of the wet well intake, making its way into the wet well, through the pumps and Y-strainer, and severely clogging up individual sprinkler heads on the golf course. When the screens on the bottom of the sprinkler head internals get clogged with plant material, they perform extremely poorly. When this coincides with the first heat waves of the season, this becomes a very stressful situation and calls for a huge amount of our Links Crew labour to be spent cleaning out the sprinkler heads after every time they run in the overnight program (nearly daily for many sprinkler heads). This also means that our overnight watering program is extremely ineffective. The images below are of a clogged sprinkler head internal (left) and the clogged Y-strainer on our main pumphouse manifold (right).

The situation has been mitigated for the time being by having divers come in and installed rubber mats at the end of the wet well intake pipe, in order to smother the existing plant material present in that location and create a barrier so that the plant material making its way into the wet well is minimized. With any luck, this should help us make it through the 2025 golf season relatively smoothly/minimizing the amount of clogged

sprinkler heads on the course. The long term plans in consideration include having a long-stick excavator come in during the off season and dredge a section of the pond around the wet well intake pipe to create a large barrier area and less potential for future plant growth in this area (the shallower the bottom of the pond around the pipe is, the more potential for sunlight to reach it, and for plant growth to occur). Another possible option is to look into extending the intake pipe – which would involve installing a 90 degree junction and directing the end of the pipe towards a deeper, more central part of the pond. The challenge with both plans is that as our holding pond receives the treated/recycled wastewater from the community on a constant basis, it is difficult to get the pond level low enough to complete this work. I will consult with a couple of excavation experts and receive their advice/opinions on this project before the off season, as well as with our Utilities/Operations Manager, Brad Severin, to brainstorm potential ways we can achieve one of these plans – as a more permanent solution is essential to future success of our golf course irrigation system.

Greens

Our putting greens have received a number of cultural practices in the past month to encourage good conditions moving forward. These include verti-cutting and top dressing every 2-3 weeks (completed on our “maintenance day” delayed start mornings), as well as fertilizer applications every two weeks, and wetting agent applications once a month. They are due for another needle tine aeration in the coming weeks so expect that in the not-so-distant future. We also recently lowered the heigh of cut(H.O.C.) on the greens before the Golf Canada tournament and continue to roll them regularly as well. In my opinion, the putting surfaces are rolling quite true at the moment – which should hopefully lend to more birdie putts made out on the course. Mother nature has finally provided us with consistent warm temperatures, and therefor warmer soil temperatures – ensuring that the turf is now growing more vigorously.

Fairways

Following the completion of our fairway verti-cutting program that concluded in early May, our fairways have received a granular fertilizer application in order to help them recover/grow back stronger. This combination has been very successful & a noticeable improvement in the condition of the fairways has occurred. Hopefully the golfers are noticing more golf ball roll out on their tee shots (and second shots on par 5's). The Links Crew has also switched to a 50/50 cut on fairways to increase efficiency and better stay ahead of play. I know some golfers will miss the stripes, but this change has allowed the crew to reduce fairway mowing time by 15-20%, leaving more time for afternoon/2nd tasks like string trimming, hand-watering, filling divots, irrigation improvements, etc.

Tees

Our tee boxes have received another deep-tine aeration in the past month. This process fractures the compacted soil layer, allows water to penetrate more deeply, and gives roots room to stretch deeper into the soil profile – all promoting a healthier, more resilient turfgrass.

Equipment

The Links Crew recently had the chance to demo some new Baroness turf maintenance equipment. The two pieces of equipment we were able to demo included a new greens/tee mower, along with a bunker rake/sand pro. Baroness has had a large presence in Asian markets for many years but has recently made a strong push into North America and aims to compete strongly against Toro. Their Japanese-made pieces of equipment are robust, well-designed, easy to use, and produce great results. The Baroness greens/tee mower has a quality of cut that is second to none. They are also very competitively priced, often coming in well under the cost of a comparable Toro unit. The delivery time on new pieces of equipment is also considerably faster than what the golf industry has been experiencing from Toro in recent years. It is my recommendation that Rivershore strongly considers Baroness equipment in for future turf maintenance equipment purchases. The operators were very pleased with them during the demonstration, and I had several golfers noticing the differences in the sand traps as well.

From the desk of Eric Newnham, Golf Course Superintendent at Rivershore Estates & Golf Links.