



WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO HOLLOW TINE THE GREENS?

Dave Weston gives advice about the ideal time to treat the greens.

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Because of the disruption and inconvenience to the golfer, this standard annual function has to be planned into the annual fixture list, to avoid it being done close to an Open or Major Club fixture. The purpose of the standard annual hollow tine is to relieve the compaction of the greens, by exchanging solid compact material for loose top dressing. Some Clubs may choose to deep scarify or overseed their Greens at the same time (or both) to keep the inconvenience to the players to a minimum.

There is a large capital investment necessary to complete the work quickly and efficiently. Usually the greens will be verti-drained (to break up any pan) cored, (to remove between 4% and 7% of the surface) and the cores collected (preferably mechanically with a core-harvester, as lifting off 1 ton of material per green by hand is back breaking work for the staff).

If the Club has to hire in the suite of equipment to carry out the process, or even part of it, their timing is at the mercy of the supplier. It may be booked for a particular week, but bad weather may hold up the previous user and delay the start of the work. For the Club with their own equipment, then selecting the week when the weather is likely to be dry, is their gamble.

The traditional time to carry out the process is late September but if heavy rain is encountered after tining and before refilling, the greens may be left open over winter, producing a soggy, bumpy surface throughout the winter months. For the last three years we have booked the second and third weeks in August for the work. In all three years, the work has been started and finished with the greens back in play and putting satisfactorily within 5 days.

The staff have been especially helpful, by working both early and late when the weather was fine. It is the refilling of the tine holes that is the difficult part of the procedure. It is a waste of time to top dress and drag-mat first thing in the morning as the dampness of the dew, prevents the top dressing material falling into the tine holes. It is only when the greens are completely dry that they should be worked on. It may be necessary to lightly top dress and drag-mat several times in order to fill them. It is essential to fill the tine holes to the very top, to support the edge of the solid sward. If not, the edge moves into the hole, and the greens become very bumpy. If they are filled to the top and then solid tined, chisel tined or slit, those edges firm up and if done in the growing season, the golfer does not notice the work has been done, apart from seeing the final top dressing material for a couple of days.

From the golfer's point of view, it is the putting quality that is important, and if a true level surface can be restored as quickly as possible after tining, then the choice of time to do the work, should be within the main growing season, May to September, not the winter months.

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