

GRASS CLIPPINGS – No

26

My calendar has reminded me that it is time to deliver again.

There was a time when it was easy to decide on a subject because there were so many to choose from, but, after 25 Clippings the choice is becoming more limited.

Thinking back on my years as the inspector of greens (for a few years I was inspecting 350 greens / year) I realised I had not touched on two of the commonest faults I found on our greens – the apparent inability of Green keepers (GKP) to move their rink numbers frequently and run-off into the ditch.

1.0 Rink Numbers

It is very disheartening to arrive at a club and the first thing you notice is bare areas at 5.0 m intervals around the sides of the greens where the mat would normally be placed

Sometimes the GKP's think they are clever and move the rinks the day before the inspection leaving the bare patches opposite the rink boundaries – who do they think they are bluffing.

It is not only the fact that the GKP is not utilising the whole expanse of the green but when one sees this one must wonder at his suitability to be the custodian of something as precious as the green. Either he does not notice the mat wear on his green or is too lazy to do something about it.

Let us discuss the subject of rink movements in order to insure the maximum utilisation of the green space and what the GKP should do to make rink movements easy for himself and his staff.

Preamble

The prime objective of any GKP is to provide the members with a bowls playing surface.

He cannot do this unless he has an even mat of healthy grass which completely covers the whole green.

His management of the grass is important – He must ensure that there is sufficient leaf area to maintain a level of food production which will enable the grass to grow at the required rate.

- He must ensure that there is a constant supply of water and fertiliser

coupled with the means to combat any diseases that may occur.

- He must ensure that the rate of growth will be faster than the rate at which the grass is being damaged by the wear and tear of machinery and players.

The GKP will soon find that, although some wear and tear is spread all over the green, the main wear is caused by the players where they deliver the bowls. This area is confined, only, to the periphery of the green.

He will, also, soon discover that however much he might stimulate growth he will not be able to maintain a rate of growth which exceeds the rate at which the grass is being broken down unless he regularly spreads the load of player damage

Those who look at Wimbledon will see how, within a few days, the area at the base line becomes brown and appears worn. This happens because, with play taking place every day, there is no time for the grass in that area to “green up “and recover before the next day's play.

The caretaker of the courts at Wimbledon knows that the tournament only lasts 14 days and that, thereafter, he will have the opportunity to rest his courts.

The Bowls GKP does not have that advantage – the wear on his greens is constant and that **while the management of the grass might be his primary concern the maximum utilisation of the green space is, also, a priority.**

Note The green space referred to above is, actually, only the perimeter of the green (i.e. the outer 3.00m) . The load (the movements of the machinery and the players walking across the green)on the central portion, is, to all intents and purposes already equalised

1.1 Moving the Rink Numbers

1.1.1. One has only to look at a green early in the morning after a day's play to see dew all over the green except on those parts where the mat had been placed on the day before. On closer examination it can be seen that the leaves are still lying flat where the mat had been placed and the players had been standing. This darker area is usually about 1.0 m wide and 2.5m. long.

1.1.2 In any game of bowls a player will stand next to or behind the mat before he steps on to it. He will take his stance and then step forward to deliver his bowl after which he might, even, take another step forward off the mat or step back wards to “give up” the mat for the next player.

In the meantime the other players will be standing in various positions behind the mat

This activity around the mat will take place 18 times at each end in a 3-bowl trips game.

1.1.3 In those clubs where there is a high player count and/or a high usage of the greens it is essential for the preservation of that part of the green where the mat is normally placed (Mat Area) that the rinks should be moved before signs of wear appear.

1.1.4 In those clubs where the mat area is not threatened because the traffic count is low it is still important that the rinks should be moved regularly to avoid a hollow developing in the centre of the rink where the players walk.

The last thing a GKP wants is to be accused of “playing between rinks” because he left the numbers in one position for too long and allowed a hollow to develop so that when he eventually moved the rinks there was a ridge down the middle of the green. (I knew of a large club with 4 greens where they never moved the rinks for 27 years – after that time you could not afford to move the rinks because of the ridge where the strings had been)

The one essential of any procedure is that it should be easy to implement.

If the rinks are to be moved regularly then it is important that there should be marks on the banks or on the ditchboards making it easy for the green assistant to move and place the boundary pegs and the numbers. The easiest method would be to have marks on the ditchboards.

1.2 Width of Rinks

Before any marks can be made the Club must decide how wide the rinks should be.

1.2.1 Bowls SA insist that for their competitions the rinks must be 5.0 m wide

1.2.2 Clubs have a choice of two main widths – 5.0 m and 4.8 m

Large Greens (38.0 m or larger) Here it would be easy to accommodate 5.0 m rinks

Smaller Greens (36.5 m or less).The club should seriously consider 4.8 m rinks if they have a high traffic count and frequent movement of the rinks becomes essential.

If the club insists on 5.0 m rinks the boundary peg would be only 0.75 m from the corner when laying out 7 rinks

Most players would willingly accept 4.8 m rinks when they have the advantage that there will be more space at the side when setting out 7 rinks.

(If they host a BowlsSA Tournament it would be easy to revert to 5.0 m rinks for that Tournament)

1.3. Procedure

For 5.0 m Rinks – using Red and Black Paint

1.3.1 Starting on the North side of the green establish, by measurement, the centre of that side and make a **red mark** on the ditch board at that point.(Ensure that the ditch board is clean before applying the paint). The mark should be easily visible but not more than 10 mm wide.

1.3.2. Staring at that point and walking East make a **red mark** on the ditch board every 2.5 m

1.3.3 Return to the centre point again and walk west and make a **red mark** on the ditch board every 2.5 m .

1.3.4 Starting at the centre red mark walk east and make a **Black mark** on the ditch board 1.25 m from the original red mark

1.3.5 Starting at that black mark walk east and make a black mark every 2.5 m .

1.3.6 Starting at the first black mark walk west and make a black mark every 2.5 m.

1.3.7 The red and black marks should all be 1.25m apart

1.3.8 Repeat the whole process on all the other sides

Note A possible additional measure is to paint a part (about 75 mm) of the ditchboard white before putting on the black or red paint. This makes it easier to find and, also makes it possible for you to make a narrower red or black mark

Note As Technical officials use a string to determine whether a bowl or the jack is in play and a more precise point indicating the boundary of the rink is needed many GKP's also make a small mark with an angle grinder on the ditchboard in the red or black mark

For 4.8 m Rinks

Instead of the colour being at 2.5 m intervals the colour mark will be 2.4m apart and 1.2 between colours

Note It is important that the GKP should start at the centre spot of each side. If he starts at the corner of the side he might find the rinks distorted if the green is not an exact square. Starting at the centre spot of each side eliminates that possibility.

1.4 Options

Having demarcated the green with Red and Black markers the GKP can now look at his options.

1.4.1 Starting at the red colour marker about 1.5 m from the left hand edge put a boundary peg and continue from there – Alternating boundary pegs with rink numbers. There will be 7 rinks

While we do not recommend using 7 rinks too often the GKP can use the inner 5 rinks (leaving out No's 1 and 7) when ever he knows he is only going to need fewer rinks

1.4.2 Starting at the black colour marker about 2.75 m (2.7 m. in the case of 4.8 m rinks) from the left hand edge place a boundary peg and alternate with rink numbers and boundary pegs

1.4.3 Starting at the red colour marker about 4.0 m (3.9 m in the case of 4.8 m rinks) from the left hand edge put a boundary peg and alternate as before.

1.4.4 Starting at the black colour marker about 5.25 m (5.1 m in the case of 4.8 m rinks) from the left hand edge put a boundary peg and alternate as before. Repeat this process on all four sides

Comment

- There will not be a single boundary peg less than 1.45 m from the edge of the green.

- There are four movements before the GKP is obliged to return to the setting he started with.

Timing the Movement of the Rinks

The length of time the GKP stays at the same setting will depend on a number of factors.

- Cultivar Cyn. Transvalensis - Bayview Florida Skaapplaas – will show wear before most other grasses but will recover quicker.

Cyn, Dactylon – Kweek , Paspalum will take longer to show wear but take much longer to recover. The safest method would be to move the rinks before there is any sign of wear.

- Traffic When referring to “traffic” it does not only mean the number of people using a rink but, also, the use of a rink. A game of singles will not cause as much wear as a game of fours or trips but the wear is still significant

- Usage of Greens At a city club where the majority of members are still employed there would be little midweek play and the rinks could be moved once a week.

At a coastal club where the members are mainly retirees midweek play is often greater than week-end play. Here the rinks might have to be moved more frequently but the GKP would be able to rest a green over the week-end.

During a prolonged Tournament the rinks should be moved every day three moves (one red and two blacks) should be ample to avoid wear.

1.5. Other Options

It must be noted that when discussing the maximum usage of the green space the main problem lies with the perimeter of the green where the greatest wear can be expected. It is in this area where the distribution of the load becomes critical.

The load on the centre of the green (Passage of the machinery and players walking from one end to the other side) is more or less already equally distributed.

In a club with average usage, only, moving the rinks might be sufficient guard against wear showing but in a club with a traffic count in excess of 350 – 400 players per green per month the GKP might have to resort to additional measure to “distribute the load”

Even if his club does not have such a high traffic count the GKP might consider it correct and more advantageous to ensure that all the available space is used equally.

1.5.1 Make a rule on Tabs-in days that the mat be placed where the head was in the previous end – i.e. where the jack had been thrown in the previous end. This will ensure a backward and forward movement of the mat

Author's Note This measure is probably the key to the full utilisation of the green space. It takes some time for the members to become accustomed to applying this rule but I have never seen signs of “mat wear” in a club following this recommendation.

1.5.2 Do not, always place the boards on the same side of the green but place them on the opposite side occasionally

It is surprising how often players place their feet on the edge of the green and “vroetel” around in their bags during a game.

1.5.3 Each green has a morning direction and an afternoon direction of play. No clubs have organised bowls as often in the morning as in the afternoon.

The GKP should, always, be on the look-out for overcast days when he can afford to play in the morning direction without inconveniencing the players

1.5.4 Every club has players who come to practice. They tend to have their favourite rinks and unless they are told otherwise will practice on those rinks. This can lead to some wear and if it becomes a problem it is up to the GKP to designate a few rinks for practice. A portable notice saying “Green Closed” or one indicating where practice should take place might be useful.

1.5.5 A very affective additional measure is for the GKP to strengthen the perimeter by increasing the leaf area. This can be achieved by, either raising the mowing height over the perimeter by 0.5 mm or, by single cutting the perimeter and not thinning out the mat to the same extent that he would the centre portion.

These measures would increase the photosynthetic capability of the perimeter to a level where sufficient “food” is being produced to enable the defence mechanism of the grass plant in that area to deal with the traffic.

1.5.6 If these measures are not sufficient to deal with the wear caused by traffic the GKP would be obliged to warn the President and his Committee that they space or lay down another green.

1.6. Planning Play

The GKP must plan his playing programme to allow an equitable distribution of the load –

1.6.1 There will be days when only a portion of a green will be required. He must not always start at Rink No 1 and follow from there. Every alternate day he must start from Rink No 6 and work backwards.

He must, also, take note of shadows on the green or anything else which might limit the recovery time of one or two rinks and avoid overloading them.

1.6.2 Choice of Greens It can happen that one green is not as healthy as the other and might have to be spared more often. Only experience will decide how the GKP should handle this problem

Note Marking the green -In every club there are always a few members who, while unwilling to be permanently involved in administrative duties, would be only too will to set a few hours aside to mark a green as indicated above.

2.0 Run-off

Nothing will upset a player more than if he is required to play to a jack which, has been moved near to or into the ditch and he finds it impossible to keep the bowl on the green because there is a slope into the ditch over the last 1.0 metre of the green

With so many GKP's repeatedly mowing to the edge of the green it is inevitable that, eventually the outer 1000mm of the green will slope into the ditch

To the inspector run-off into the ditch is a “punishable offence” because it indicates that the Green Keeper is not aware of what is going on or is just plain lazy.

Internationally a green may be 3.0 m higher at the edge than 3.0 metre inwards.

Without even testing his green for run-off the diligent GKP would, at least every 6 months, top dress the outer 1.00 m of the green to avoid a slope developing. In addition he would, also top dress the outer 500 mm once a year.

It is a small chore and does not interfere with play so there is no reason not to do it.

I once inspected a club four times over a period of 8 years and found severe run-off on all four sides of their “A” green with every inspection and every time they lost an “A” grading because of the run-off.

I wonder what the members thought ???

SUMMARY – GRASS CLIPPINGS 26

In Grass Clippings 26 we have identified two common faults found on greens during an inspection.

- 1 Failure to move the rink numbers regularly has led to certain parts of the green being over-utilised and suffered as a consequence while other parts are untouched.
- 2 There can be nothing more frustrating to a skip when trying to save a big score to find it impossible to stop his bowl on the edge of the green because the outer 1000mm slopes into the ditch.

1 Moving Rink Numbers Every Green keeper should know that at any club with a high traffic count failure to move the rink numbers regularly will result in bare patches developing at a point opposite the numbers and about 1.5 – 2.5 m from the edge of the green.

These bare patches will not disappear unless the Green keeper takes active steps to rest that area.

While stressing the importance of utilising the whole of the green space with emphasis on the need to avoid “mat wear” Grass Clippings 26 offers a simple solution by using markers on the ditch boards to indicate where the numbers and boundary pegs could be placed.

The article, also, touches on the advantages inherent in adopting 4.8 m rinks where the green size is 36.5 m or less.

2.0 Run Off Few things on the green upset a player more than to find that he cannot play near to the edge of the green because the last metre of the green slopes into the ditch.

A slope into the ditch is inevitable if the Green keeper regularly mows up to the edge of the green. Over a period mower traffic up to the edge will compress that area and a gradual slope will develop.

A diligent Green keeper would anticipate this by regularly top-dressing the outer 1000mm of the green.