



Ladies European Tour
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TOURNAMENT AGRONOMY PREPARATION GUIDELINES



The 2007 Solheim Cup, Halmstad, Sweden – 12th Hole

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document has been produced to assist the Course Manager/Superintendent/Head Greenkeeper in preparing for a Ladies European Tour (LET) event. It outlines our recommendations on how the golf course should be prepared in the months and weeks leading up to the event. These guidelines are not directly applicable to all courses due to differences in climate, time of year, grass varieties, course architecture and construction. For that reason an LET Greenkeeping Consultant will visit the course if advised by the Tournament Director to assist in tournament preparation. The Greenkeeping Consultant in discussion with the Tournament Director will outline the specification for the tournament conditioning. The Tournament Director, Chief Rules Official and Greenkeeping Consultant will arrive on site during the advance weekend to make final judgements and adjustments on conditions for the event. **The key to the success of this phase of preparations is to have all course conditioning requirements fully completed prior to their arrival on site.**

When a tournament is staged the course is subject to close scrutiny not only from the competitors but the world's press and public as well. Developments in television technology (High Definition) contribute to every small and minor detail being visible hence the reason to ensure conditions and presentation of the course are up to standard. Where possible the LET try to standardise playing conditions of the various courses we visit during a season as much as possible in so far as standardisation is feasible.

In planning the preparation for an event the host venue must carefully consider the use of the course in the month leading up to the tournament, and the eventual course closure date to its members and guests. In our experience, every 24 hours before the players arrive that the course can be completely rested, allowing the greenkeepers time to 'repair' and 'prepare' can make an enormous difference to its condition for the event and therefore the image of the host venue worldwide.

It is hoped that the following information will help in your advance planning for the tournament. If you do require further information please do not hesitate to contact our Tournament Operations department on +44 (0) 1895 831028.

2.0 GREENS

The LET has three main criteria during a tournament and in order of priority are:

1. Smoothness of putting surface which will allow a ball to run straight and true without 'snaking' or 'bobbling' and remain in contact with the surface at all times.
2. Pace of greens should be as fast as possible provided that the surface smoothness is not sacrificed in order to produce speed. Obviously each host venue will vary in speed depending on putting green construction, grass variety, mowers and climatic conditions but speeds between 10.6 and 11.6 feet on the stimpmeter are desirable.
3. A good green will be firm, not hard and will accept a well struck iron shot.

Ideally putting greens should be firm and fast to provide the best test for approach shots and putts. The general tendency is to over water. This is bad for the long-term health of the turf. Soft greens do not reward the skilful shot over the poor one.

Nutrition applications should be geared towards gradually achieving the desired level of turf density and consistency approximately 1 month prior to the tournament. Applications are initially more aggressive than normal to build sufficient energy reserves to withstand wear from maintenance practices and the inevitable increases in play and traffic. In the final lead up to the event it is better to apply Micronutrients, Seaweed and Iron with little or no Nitrogen. This will help to promote colour and maintain density and stress tolerance without promoting excessive growth. Where permissible the use of the plant growth regulators *Primo Maxx* (Trinexapac-ethyl) and seed head suppressant *Proxycerone* (Ethephon) are advised particularly on *Poa annua* spp. turf.

2.1 GREENS MOWERS

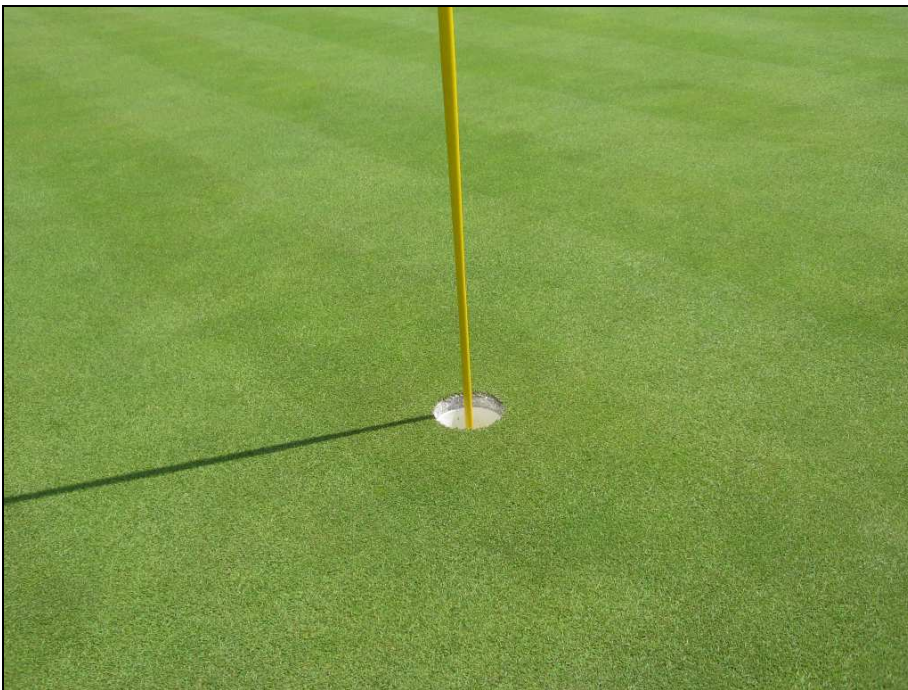
1. The use of hand mowers for tournaments rather than triplex equipment is preferred. We suggest a cutting height of 2.5-3.2mm (bench setting). The greens should be cut at tournament height from the week preceding the tournament. Any sudden adjustment in greens height will result in a stress, discolouration and most likely scalping.
2. The frequency of mowing required in the lead up to and during an event places a special emphasis on quality of cut and mower blade sharpness. It is critical to maintain sharp reel blades and bed knives to avoid bruising the leaf tips which would lead to undue stress on the green.

3. If groomers are used a high setting is preferred so as not to put the sward under pressure. Verticutting should end at least three weeks in advance of the tournament week to allow greens recover. The LET advocate the use of Brushing of greens right up to the advance weekend of the tournament to remove lateral growth and promote and even ball roll.

2.2 HOLE LOCATIONS

The Tournament Director will suggest to the Head Greenkeeper, during a course visit, likely tournament hole locations and these settings should be protected. We ask that in the weeks leading up to a tournament all hole locations are placed around the extreme perimeter of greens. A check of all greens for old hole positions that are sunken or raised and require repair should be made. Replacement of any dead plugs from a nursery or extremities of the green that are out of play is recommended at least 1 month in advance of the tournament and continued going into tournament week. The practice putting and chipping greens should be prepared exactly the same as those on the course, and that new holes be cut at the beginning and during the tournament week.

'Hole In White' paint as per the image below is used to enhance definition, presentation and competitor's visibility of the hole



The host venue will provide a new set of white metal cups and white or yellow flagsticks. Flagsticks may be black around the base to aid players in seeing the hole location. This will be determined by the Tournament Director. New cups and flag sticks should be in use just prior to the host venue closing for play to ensure a little wear on the flag stick for easy removal. The LET or tournament promoter will provide tournament flags. A new cup cutter (or at least new blades) must be used to ensure a crisp edge around holes.

The following list of tools is required for each hole cutter during the tournament week:

- Hole cutter (new blade to be sharpened daily on the inside)
- Tool bucket
- Large towel
- Depth setting ring
- Hole cup removal tool
- Tool to knit edges of replaced plug
- Watering can

- Extra rootzone (greens mix) to levelling hole plugs
- Pair of small scissors
- *Hole In White* paint, application device and a shield for painting in windy conditions.

2.3 GREEN SPEED

The Tournament Director will dictate green speed, however it is expected that this will be somewhere between 10.6 and 11.6 feet (recorded using a USGA stimpmeter). Evaluating the starting point for overall putting quality, particularly ball roll is done by taking a number of Stimpmeter readings to determine quickness and consistency. Naturally, the farther the greens are from the goal, the earlier corrective action must begin. If the slow pace is due to excessive grain or puffiness, lowering the height will not solve the problem. Therefore, it is always best to begin the process of greens preparation several months prior to the event. Regular verticutting, topdressing, grooming and brushing along with routine core and solid tine aeration will help achieve tournament quality greens.

2.4 GREENS IRRIGATION

Irrigation application usually needs to be reduced in the lead up to the event to help promote a firm putting surface with a high stress tolerance. Monitor soil moisture levels by taking a physical 6mm diameter sample from the greens to determine water requirements. To better condition greens going into a drought like scenario it is important to gradually reduce irrigation frequency and timing rather than just cutting off the water during event week. During tournament week all syringe and irrigation applications must be discussed with the Tournament Director.

3.0 BUNKERS

Bunkers are without a doubt the most inconsistent playing surface the LET experiences throughout a season. Players are not necessarily looking for an advantage while playing from a bunker but they do expect consistency. LET players rank bunkers as the second most important area of conditioning and consistency on a golf course. As a result it is important bunkers are prepared and conditioned appropriately.

If any fresh sand is required in the bunkers, it should be applied at least three months in advance of the tournament so that it may become well settled. If there is inadequate rain to pack the sand, it must be watered and compacted manually. If any bunkers require work in the week prior to or during the tournament, the sand should be compacted with a vibrating soil compactor.

The correct particle size distribution of the sand is an important factor as it affects the playing qualities and maintenance of bunkers. The decision regarding the type and gradation of bunker sand should always be based on a physical analysis (particle size distribution test) of the sand followed by its aesthetical characteristics. LET recommends using ETL (European Turfgrass Laboratories) to complete all USGA bunker sand physical testing. ETL's contact details are available at the following web page: www.etl-ltd.com
A sand which meets USGA particle size distribution, percolation, minimum surface crusting potential and passes a fried egg lie test will provide the best conditions for ball lie, firmness of footing, internal water drainage and ease of maintenance.

It is preferable that bunkers be maintained by hand raking during the tournament. Bunker rakes should be provided at all bunkers. These should be positioned outside the bunkers in a position least likely to interfere with play. The new *Accuform* rakes are highly recommended. If these are not used, make sure that any rakes utilised do not leave furrows. If machine raking is necessary, hand raking should follow, thus removing any irregularities and making sure that exit points do not become untidy or worn.



Bunkers should be carefully edged one month prior to the tournament. Thereafter grass runners should be trimmed weekly in advance of the event to ensure there is no question as to whether the ball lies within the bunker or not. Please ensure no loose sand is left around bunkers (remove by brushing on a daily basis).

LET recommend 125mm (5") of compacted bunker sand on the bunker floor and 50mm (2") of compacted bunker sand on bunker faces. These depths should be fully in place no later than 1 month prior to the event and checked (using a depth measuring probe) weekly thereafter until the conclusion of the event.

4.0 COLLARS & APPROACHES

For the most part, collars and approaches should be treated as the greens from a fertiliser, pesticide and cultural (aeration, topdressing, verticutting and brushing) point of view. It is useful to have the cutting heights the same as the tees, i.e. 6-8 mm as generally the same type of mower is used to cut both. It is important, however, that the approach be cut in a diamond pattern and that the collar be cut in reverse direction each day to prevent the build up of nap. The collar should measure approximately 1.6 metres or the width of one pass of a triplex greens mower.

5.0 TEEING GROUNDS

Tees should be level, firm and maintained at a height of 6-8mm particularly in areas where tournament tees are to be placed. LET tournament tees should be fully reserved from normal play for eight weeks prior to the

tournament, in order to avoid a thin turfgrass cover. The best way of protecting the areas on the short hole tees would be to cover the teeing ground with some netting. This netting should remain in place until the course is closed for public play. Tees should be cut in a diamond pattern during the tournament as a tee cut directly towards a fairway can be misleading, if the teeing ground is set at an angle to the line of play. Tournament tees should receive the same cultural program as greens, greens collars and approaches.

6.0 FAIRWAYS

Fairways should be approximately 25 metres in width depending on difficulty of the hole in question.

Fairways should be cut in a diamond pattern and the burning in of mowing lines should commence during the advance week only. If contour mowing is agreed by all parties the cutting lines should not be permanently established until the advance week of the tournament, i.e. cross cutting and alternate cutting directions should be the norm up until this time as this reduces significant amounts of nap.

The fairways should be cut at a height of 10-13mm. Fluffiness in fairway turf is undesirable and the tendency should be toward firm, tight turf. Regular verticutting should be carried out on the fairways to minimise this. The last vertical cut should be carried out 8 weeks prior to the event, thus reducing the thatch layer. Mowing height for tournament play should be established one to two weeks in advance as last minute reductions in mowing heights create excessive loose grass clippings and could cause yellowing and scalping.

Wherever possible, fairways should cut in the morning prior to play. It is of critical importance to remove/box clippings during a morning cut. Where it is not possible to obtain boxes, it may be necessary to cut some or all fairways after play and in this instance we would require fairways to be swept before play (normally by dragging a hosepipe) to remove dew.

7.0 SEMI-ROUGH

There should be a strip of semi-rough 2 – 4 metres in width on each side of the fairway, this should be cut at a height of 25mm and encompass any and all relating bunkers.

Additionally a strip of semi-rough should be cut from the tournament tee in the most direct line possible to the fairway on every hole to serve as a player walkway.

8.0 ROUGH

Rough or playable rough should be maintained at 50mm for the event. Although this is considerably lower than a traditional PGA European Tour event this height is what we feel is optimum to show case LET members ability while providing a strong test of golf. This height may be altered depending on each individual course (turfgrass species and density). If change is necessary then this will be instructed by the Tournament Director or Greenkeeping Consultant.

Roughs should be decompacted (vertidrain) overseeded and fertilised if necessary to increase density to properly support a golf ball. A good rough should have an even height and density that will allow a ball to nestle, but not disappear into the turfgrass sward. Rough mowing during tournament week will be advised by the Tournament Director or Greenkeeping Consultant.

9.0 NUTRITION PLANNING AND APPLICATION

All fertiliser programs for individual turfgrass areas on the course should be aimed at gradually achieving the desired level of turf density and consistency one month prior to the event. Generally this means applications are more aggressive early on and reduce considerably as we approach event week. This helps to build energy reserves in the turf to help it better withstand wear from tournament maintenance practices and inevitable increases in play and traffic.

10.0 DIVOTING

A complete programme of divoting should be carried out at least 4 weeks prior to the tournament. Certain areas of the course, particularly short holes and driving areas on par 4 holes, require the filling of divots. A mixture of 75% sand 25% peat or top soil and seed properly applied and pressed down makes for a well-repaired divot. Care should be taken that the filled divot is level with the surrounding ground otherwise a bad lie may be created.

Divoting will take place just prior to fairway mowing and will be necessary after each practice round and tournament round.

On some holes, where the design means balls must accumulate in one particular area we recommend that these areas are rested for 2-4 weeks prior to the event by reducing/increasing the usual the length of the hole or create dropping zones.

11.0 RAIN PREPARATIONS

It is important and vital to the tournament schedule that equipment be available to dry greens when play is delayed by rain. It is often necessary to dry the teeing grounds as well. A number of squeegees should be available. The Course Manager should ensure that all of his staff are on-site during the advance weekend and tournament week in case they are needed to assist in drying the course out after a heavy downpour of rain and of course for general maintenance. The LET will provide some squeegees for use during an event. Please liaise with the Tournament Director or Greenkeeping Consultant as to their availability.

12.0 TREES

Consider filling tree basins (wells) after trees are well established. Also, remove support wires and tree wrappings where possible. Prune low hanging branches to facilitate gallery movement and where they might be unfair in the playing of a shot. They should especially be cleared from areas near to the teeing ground. Young trees requiring protection from play should be clearly marked by a wooden stake and/or taped/banded.

13.0 PRACTICE GROUND

A well prepared practice ground is essential for the success of the tournament. The teeing area should be marked into bays starting at the front and working back each day. It should also be roped off to avoid spectators straying on to the ground. The teeing areas should be prepared as the same as tees on the course however mowing height should resemble fairway height of cut. A practice putting green and practice bunkers should also be included close to the area.

14.0 COURSE DEFINITION

LET officials will mark all GUR, water hazards and out of bounds. We will also advise on the exact positioning of water hazard markings and any awkward out of bounds definitions. The Club will be asked to secure the necessary coloured marking stakes and paint. We usually require assistance (mowing and cleaning) prior to marking on preparing the contouring of the water hazards and/or boundaries to mark up the course.

15.0 COURSE SET UP

During the planning meeting stage of preparation a course inspection will be carried out by the Tournament Director and possibly the Greenkeeping Consultant. The Course Manager, General Manager and Tournament Promoter will be invited on this course inspection. The Tournament Director will set the course up for the forthcoming event by selecting tournament tees and deciding upon hole distances. He/She along with the Greenkeeping Consultant will then prepare a course report the Course Manager which will outline the LET's requirements such as turf preparation, saving of tees and various other requests.



AIB Ladies Irish Open – 18th Hole – Portmarnock Hotel & Golf Links