

GREENS BEAT THE RAIN

Sandslitting the greens at Foxhills Golf Club and Resort has solved drainage problems

FOXHILLS Golf Club and Resort at Ottershaw in Surrey called on Speedcut Contractors of Oxford to carry out drainage work on greens at the magnificent 440-acre course as part of continuing improvements to course conditions.

A wet summer in 2009 brought drainage problems to a head on several badly-draining greens, said course manager David Wyborn.

Speedcut contracts manager Kevin Smith said: "We carried out sandslitting on two greens that October with our AFT Wizz Wheel, having done one in March, and the heavy rain during the summer showed the full extent of the problems."

Previously Speedcut had used their two brand new laser-guided Mastenbroek 10/12Ds on six fairways at Foxhills, cutting trenches, removing spoil and laying pipeline.

"The torrential rain in July, up to two inches in a day on two occasions, would have been a real problem on the Longcross course but Speedcut had sandbanded fairways one, two and three and they drained fantastically," said David. "Speedcut also did three fairways on the Bernard Hunt course."

David Wyborn has been at Foxhills for 25 years, having previously been at Sunningdale (with Jack Macmillan) and the New Zealand Golf Club at Woodham, Surrey.

"In 2009 we had the second wettest year on record, and certainly the wettest summer," says David. "Our drainage programme became increasingly pressing. During that summer we were hit by dreadful rain in July, which followed a terrible winter.

"The rainfall in 2009 between the beginning of October and the end of February was a record 18 inches," says David. "That summer really hit everybody, but we were lucky because Speedcut had done such a good job."

Six of the fairways at Foxhills had suffered the previous winter and had to be closed for short periods, not only because of water not draining but because of slippery surfaces in some areas becoming a health and safety issue for players.

"We decided to drain three fairways on the Longcross course and three on the Bernard Hunt course," said David.

"The soil conditions on the course vary between sand and heavy blue clay, but in general the soil is heavy and poor-draining."

The three greens that were sandslit with the AFT Wizz Wheel are on the Longcross course. "They have always been prone to wetness," says David. "But Speedcut did an excellent job and they now drain well."

David (45) has 18 full-time staff at Foxhills, which was created in the mid Seventies and now boasts the two 18-hole courses plus the Manor nine-hole course.

Built on gently-undulating well-forested terrain - a typical Surrey blend of heathland and parkland - Foxhills has been a PGA European Tour qualifying school course and is home to the county amateur championships.

Rainbird Irrigation systems are in place and Toro is the main supplier of cutting equipment.

Based around a listed manor house dating from 1841, Foxhills is about three miles from the M25. As well as the three golf courses, the club also has a health club, gym, swimming pools, squash courts and 12 hard tennis courts. It also has accommodation of 38 rooms.

"Foxhills has superb surroundings," says David, "and is very challenging from a greenkeeping point of view. To maintain the very high standards drainage work is essential. Club members are very understanding and know all the work and disruption is for their benefit."

Speedcut Contractors have carried out both drainage on the greens with their AFT Wizz Wheel and main-line drainage, plus tee laser-levelling and reconstruction and bunker work.

Their Mastenbroek 10/12Ds use laser-guided technology to ensure total accuracy under the most exacting conditions for main-line drainage.

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