



Case Study

Northampton Golf Club

Improvement programme saves golf course thousands

Northampton Golf Club Financial Controller, David Prior says “The Bernhard grinding system is the best investment in machinery the course has ever made, showing an exceptional return of investment (ROI).”

The biting recession, falling numbers in membership mid recession in 2009 and an annual fungicide budget of £9.5k prompted Northampton Golf Club to make some big decisions.

Head Greenkeeper, Euan McKenzie explains, “The winds of recession in 2009 saw a 12% drop in membership. It was clear we needed to improve the standard of the course and the playing conditions to retain members, and hopefully attract some new ones.”

Euan embarked on an improvement programme to turn things around. His three key ingredients were a top dressing programme, aeration and regular grinding to guarantee quality of cut through the sanding programme.

A fungicide budget of £9.5k and no top dressing programme was indicative of the state of the turf health. “The R & A recommend top dressing at 150 tonnes per hectare” Euan said. “We will do what works best for our

course. Last year we used 100 tonnes, and I expect to reach about 130 tonnes by the end of this year.

With a sanding programme like this we really had to have our own sharpening system to keep the mowing fleet sharp. We could lease our own grinders for the same cost as contract sharpening, so we decided to have our own and of course now we can sharpen as often as we want.

With the increased amount of sharpening we now do in support of our top dress programme, we would have been spending three times as much, which would have made the whole programme unaffordable. We could not do one without the other. Our grinders support the top dressing programme.”

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Euan’s fungicide budget is now down to £4.5k and he is very pleased with that. “The annual saving of £5k per annum goes straight back into my maintenance budget to

Project P&L	Before (2009)	After (2011)
Income		
Additional Membership fees		£ 100,940
Additional Membership green fees		TBA
Additional Clubhouse revenue		TBA
Expenditure		
Contract services for grinding	£ 7,500	
Lease cost for grinders	-	£ 7,500
Fungicide	£ 9,500	£ 4,500
Top dressing	-	£ 9,600
Profit (loss)	(£17,000)	£ 79,340
Turnaround (project impact)		£ 96,340



help pay for the sand. I wouldn't say that the grinders are wholly responsible for this saving, but certainly they have played a major part, and of course the playing conditions speak for themselves. Express Dual and Anglemaster are so quick to use we often give the mowers a tickle-up to keep them super sharp.

The 2010/11 membership increased by 103 and we have seen a net increase this year too, bringing the influx to over 20% and a welcome addition to the membership revenues.

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If we look at the overall impact of the project, the Bernhard sharpening system, top dressing programme and aeration show a positive impact of over £96k per annum. Allowing for revenues (not included here) for green fees and club house, the bottom line will exceed £100k.”

“With reduced operating costs, improved playing conditions and increased membership numbers I think anyone who does not have an Express Dual and Anglemaster system needs to think again” said Euan emphatically.

“Of course we had to do a budget justification to purchase the grinders. The cost/benefit focussed on contract versus ownership costs.

Now that we are over that hurdle and have the grinders, we would never look back because it didn't take into account the indirect savings from the improvement in turf health or what it has done to our membership revenues. Now we are well ahead of the game.”

