

WHAT AM I REALLY

Billy Merritt, head greenkeeper at Beacon Park, and Chris Sealey, course manager at

...WHEN I SEE UNREPAIRED PITCH MARKS

We get lots of pitch marks on our course with it being a pay and play and, to be honest, we have people practising all the time. They're the type of people who don't repair their pitch marks. In general, a lot of our golfers don't. I think their attitude is 'oh that's the greenkeeper's job'. Nobody likes pitch marks on the green, and divots are even worse, but we have a problem with both.

Here, we just assume that people won't repair them and that we need to do it, whether it's pitch marks or whatever. **BM**

Obviously, there's a huge impact on the putting surface, from a golf point of view.

From an agronomic point of view, if you don't repair the pitch mark quickly it kills or damages the root of grass as well.

It's not good for the golfers, it's not good for the green, from a putting point of view or agronomic point of view.

They look horrible if you don't repair them quickly. You get blotches everywhere. **CS**



...WHEN GOLFERS ASK ME WHY I CUT GREENS DURING THE DAY

When else should we do it? It's more of a problem in the winter because, in the summer, we start at 6am and golf doesn't start till 7.30am. Tees, greens, changing holes – we can keep in front of golfers. It's much more of an issue in the winter because of the light. We still do try to cut in front of them where possible. **CS**

...WHEN I SEE A BUNKER THAT HASN'T BEEN RAKED

You can imagine what we're like up here. We have, the same as everybody else, rakes in the bunkers and you have footmarks around the rakes.

Again, we experience the same attitude; 'it's the greenkeeper's job' and we have to live with that. We're pay and play so the course gets abused quite a lot anyway. It's just the mentality of a pay and play golf course. **BM**

We had one the other week. We actually had footprints almost underneath a rake and alongside it. Then we had one, at the end of last summer, where somebody wheeled their trolley through the bunker. It takes a bit of doing to get it out, actually, but they managed it. **CS**

THINKING...?

Chippenham, let us into their psyche. Maybe a few of you should stand back...

...WHEN I PUT ROPES OUT TO PROTECT AREAS AND GOLFERS IGNORE THEM

They think it's a new Olympic event where you limbo under them or jump over them. We get people with hedgehog wheeled trolleys actually go round the inside of the rope and wheel them across the edge of the green. As I keep telling the members, the reason we put rope up is to protect the members' club for the members. **CS**



We've got people that have little go-karts and they go under the ropes. One of the lads went over and gave them a bit of a talking to and they said 'well, my tyres are special tyres'. It doesn't matter how special the tyres are, there's a reason it's roped off. **BM**

...WHEN I SEE A DIVOT THAT HASN'T BEEN REPLACED?

A lot of the time they (golfers) do replace them but the birds, magpies and crows lift them up.

At my previous course, we had to go round re-seeding and replacing all the divots but, in general, I think they put them back. We just accept it's going to happen. **BM**

...WHEN A GOLFER TELLS ME THE COURSE IS IN GREAT CONDITION

It does happen quite often at Chippenham and it's much better than anything anyone can give you materially.

If people say 'that's a great effort', that's a huge positive. I always make sure it is passed on to the boys. I am the person that gets the bouquets and brickbats but it's the boys that have the huge impact on it. It's really nice when people come up to you and say the course looks great. **CS**

...WHEN GOLFERS EXPECT THE GREENS TO BE GREAT ALL YEAR ROUND

If you live in this country and expect that, you must be crazy. It's just unrealistic expectations. Our climate is one of the worst things to deal with, especially in winter.

The biggest stress of any greenkeeper is the weather. Our whole life revolves around the weather. If it changes, we've got to try and deal with it.

The golf course is our baby. We look after it and we don't like to see any abuse – no matter what it might be.

We take it personally. **BM** ♣