

FOCUS ON GREENKEEPING

WHAT TOP BOWLERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT GREENS

By Maurice Symes

Clubs and green staff do receive criticism from top players, much of which is completely underserved and ill informed and only a few players have any idea what clubs face to maintain greens to the same level for the whole of a bowling season.

From opening day through to the end of April we pass through three seasonal changes, spring, summer and autumn, and they all need different greenkeeping skills to keep the greens running the same speed and fully covered. Another factor is that many of our greenkeepers are now getting on in age, are often volunteers, and receive little or no remuneration for their hard work. We lack skilled greenkeepers and clubs are reluctant to pay professional greenkeepers, or cannot afford them.

If clubs do not carry out renovation work at the end of each season and go into winter with good cover, often come spring the greens lack full cover and even growth. If weather conditions through spring are either wet or very cold that also reduces the chances of greens being in good condition when the season commences. Greens in the South Island are generally superior to those of the North Island due to both climatic and soil conditions. The fact that Maniototo weed is susceptible to disease in the humid conditions of the far north of the country only allows either Dioica or Starweed, or a combination of both, to be the main surface used by most clubs. Good greens are hard to come by under these conditions and greenkeepers can only wait for conditions to suit before they can try to give bowlers the surfaces they want to be able to play consistently well. To have greens running between 15 – 18 seconds with even cover depends on many factors and some of these are not greenkeeper dependant. A lazy greenkeeper will generally not have greens

running evenly, achieve full cover or have greens running at a consistent speed.

Greens should be prepared with a general consistency of green cover to avoid contentious issues with top bowlers. The inability of being able to finish the delivered bowl to the centre line of the rink on inconsistently covered surface is what gets top players frustrated. It is for those reasons alone that greens become difficult to play for the person who thinks about line, speed with each bowl that is played.

Players need to remember greenkeeping is a science and very difficult to try and understand. Remember the greenkeeper can only produce a surface depending on what the clubs are prepared to support in the way of chemicals, fertilisers and equipment. The greenkeeper is trying to give you better greens on which to play and they worry about them more than any player.

In Summary

1. Top bowlers should realise the preparation of greens, having the same texture all over without fast and slow patches may be caused by climatic conditions in a particular area or by the lack of growth.
2. Green speeds of 15 to 18 seconds are the standard set throughout the country.
3. Runoff into ditches can only be eliminated each year at renovation time.
4. Ditch composition can be pebbles, sand or grass so long as the bowls and jack at entry point settle on a prepared holding surface.
5. Rink set out movement is so that from day to day you do not get tracking from having to run over footmarks etc.

