

OAK PARK GOLF CLUB

NOTES TAKEN AT MEETING BETWEEN OPGCMA & CROWN GOLF ON WEDNESDAY, 12 OCTOBER 2005 AT 3.30 P.M.

Present:	OPGCMA	Jon Pope	Club Captain
		Ian Brown	Vice-captain
		Sheila Waite	Lady vice-captain/Acting Lady Captain
		Jean Preston	Committee Secretary
	Crown Golf	Robert Brewer	General Manager – Oak Park

1. RECENT COMMUNICATIONS

Daniel Hodson, our Regional Manager, had visited Oak Park today and had spoken on the telephone with Jon. In reply to his e-mail to John Weir, CEO of Crown Golf, Jon had today received a very brief reply which we hope is just a holding response before a full and formal reply.

2. THE COURSE AND ITS PRESENT CONDITION

- 2.1 Robert's view is that the course has improved during the last week. The committee couldn't confirm this, but Jon and Ian will review the course with Robert on Friday 14th October. The staff are half-way round the Woodland Course weeding bunkers and generally tidying up. The new greens are looking good.
- 2.2 Deeper solid tining and hollow coring is being done next week on all greens.
- 2.3 Matt, the Course Manager at Sherfield Oaks will be working at Oak Park next week.
- 2.4 The Crown specialist team will be at Oak Park from the second week in November and will remain until at least the end of the year. They will be here 5 days a week. Work will be done on the tees, starting with the back of the 9th which will be made wider. Work on the other tees will follow. Not all tees will require renovating and we may have some temporary tees/winter mats while the work is being done. The team may not stay at Oak Park to repair the bunkers. This will be done in-house by Oak Park staff, not brought in from other clubs, and, hopefully, should begin in January. Every bunker will not be completely renovated but work will be done on them.
- 2.5 Robert hopes to send out another letter by the end of next week. Jon insisted that this should include a detailed plan of the work to be carried out with timings. Communication to members to date has been poor.
- 2.6 A report on the irrigation problem has been received and will be put out to tender.
- 2.7 Crown are advertising for a new Course Manager and a deputy Course Manager. Robert is confident that he will be able to recruit good staff.
- 2.8 Laurence Pithie the chief agronomist of Crown Golf will be undertaking the technical interviews for the top positions.
- 2.9 We now have 7 green-staff, including Vince who is the only qualified green-keeper. Nick is a qualified mechanic and the others are Darren, Steve, James, Clint and Peter. Clint and James are casual staff. Robert is hoping to have more qualified staff with a final figure of 7 or 8, to include a part-time gardener. From next week, until probably Christmas, we will have 8 green-keeping staff. There are 9 green-keeping staff at Sherfield Oaks to maintain 36 holes – but it is far easier to maintain than Oak Park.

- 2.10. Jon stressed that the communication to members is not good. We had initially been promised weekly updates but they have not happened. It is hoped that next week Robert will be able to give a schedule for work to be done each week.
- 2.11. The morale of the members is sinking and this is mainly due to lack of communication and visible work being done. Some members have had e-mail shots about the Christmas Party lunches/dinners and it is therefore frustrating when nothing comes from Crown about the state of the course. Most information to members comes directly from Jon.
- 2.12. Some of the people who are thinking of leaving may well remain for one year to reap the benefits of the compensation package and then move on thereafter. This may cause a further drop in membership for 2007. Robert reiterated that money will not be given back.
- 2.13. Although the committee view the compensation package as fair, many people would not be prepared to pay even a significantly reduced annual fee if the course is in poor condition. People travel to other Crown courses and see how good the condition of them is. Some members may chose to transfer to Sherfield Oaks but others will consider moving to private members clubs in the area. We cannot wait until the renewals at the beginning of April to start trying to retain members. Work has to be seen to be being done now.
- 2.14. There is much unhappiness among the members and any optimism there was with the initial growth of the greens has ebbed away as the condition of the rest of the course has been seen to deteriorate.
- 2.15. Robert said it was unlikely that if an Oak Park member moved to another Crown club that the discount would travel with him.

OTHER MATTERS RAISED BY OPGCMA

3. CLUBHOUSE STAFFING

- 3.1. Concern has been raised over staffing levels at recent functions attended by Oak Park Members but while accepting there was a slight problem, Robert has had very many good reports from function organisers.
- 3.2. Oak Park is at present advertising for a 2nd chef, another bar supervisor to help Mark and casual staff over the Christmas period.
- 3.3. The cost of the basic Christmas lunch of Soup, turkey and Christmas Log is £13.95. Other options vary in price. The dinners cost £19.95 Monday to Thursday and £29.95 for Friday and Saturday. The Roll-up have been given a price of £17.95 for their lunch (which now will be held at Sherfield).
- 3.4. It is the intention to hold the Ladies, Mixed midweek and Mixed Sunday competitions and lunches at Oak Park and stress that they are fun competitions with a focus on the social side.
- 3.5. Robert and Mark are to meet with Sheila and Ian on Friday, 21st at 12 o'clock to discuss menus and prices for the forthcoming functions. Sheila wants to get the notices up as soon as possible. Hilary will be meeting with Robert to discuss the menu and price for the club's Christmas Dinner-dance.

4. SENIORS WINTER LEAGUE

- 4.1. There are 5 teams in this, Pyrford, Milford, Oak Park, Old Thorns and Hoebridge. In the past, we have not been charged green-fees for visiting opponents as there has always been a meal and drinks afterwards. If there was no meal attached, then a charge would be made. However, if drinks and

bar meals were to be ordered, this would be taken into consideration. Robert sees matches as being very important for the club.

- 4.2 “Home” matches will be played at Sherfield Oaks and they will be charging £14.50 for members of visiting clubs not part of Crown Golf. There will only be 4 tee-times required for each match.

5. DIARY/FIXTURE LIST

- 5.1 We do not have an excessive amount of home matches played either midweek or at weekends and Robert does not see any major problems with them. We must make sure that some time is available each weekend morning for those not playing competitions/matches to enjoy the course.
- 5.2 There are now operational guidelines for all Crown Golf clubs in respect of reserved tee-times and Robert is happy to report that we already fall within these guidelines.
- 5.3 We will probably only have a maximum of 4 shot-guns starts each year.
- 5.4 Ian has prepared the diary/fixture list in a calendar form. The Ladies Stoneham Cup opponents will not be known until after the Hampshire AGM in November. Ian will give Robert a copy of the diary on Friday or Saturday although it has to be finally approved by Compscom.

6. COURSE ITEMS (not course conditions)

- 6.1 Portaloo – Sheila passed to Robert details of the Portaloo supplier at Sherfield Oaks, which is felt to generally be in a far superior state to the one at Oak Park.
- 6.2 On-course catering – it has not been decided if John and Sarah (Catering Van) will be returning once the course is playable.

7. COURSE MATTERS RAISED BY MEMBERS

- 7.1 The previous management, at the beginning of each year, used to publish a schedule of works to be done during the year. This was useful if members were arranging games or to bring guests. Could we have a similar plan of work published once we are back to normal?
- 7.2 Playing rights at other clubs – once the clocks go back, we will only be able to play Sherfield Oaks at weekends as we cannot play elsewhere in the mornings. Robert did not expect this to change.
- 7.3 Work is needed on the temporary greens which have drainage ditches on them, mainly the 5th, 6th and 7th.
- 7.4 The drainage ditches are particularly bad on the 5th hole and there are options on how best to correct the problem. The ditches comprise pipes with many small holes and consolidated gravel and are then turfed. In the plan of work, the 2nd hole will be done in-house and contractors will do the others.

CROWN GOLF MATTERS

8. MEMBERSHIP

Three new members have joined this month, plus another one today. The present campaign for recruiting is when a member introduces someone the existing member will receive a case of wine plus £100 and will go into a draw to win a week’s time-share at St. Mellion for life. This draw is per individual club – not one per the whole group. It was suggested that the draw will be made at the November club-night. This promotion will probably be run again in November.

9. CLUB-NIGHT

There was a small turn-out of members at the October club-night but this may have been because it was advertised to be a talk on Course Building which would probably not appeal to everyone. The next club-night, Pub Games, will be pushed strongly. Graham Rose and Robert will be asked to help with the advertising.

10. CLUB DIARIES

These will possibly be issued to existing members in January 2006 and will run for 12 months. As OPGCMA's captaincy and competitions run until the end of March 2007, this may cause some initial problems or confusion. Ian will have to create the fixture list in diary form for the first three months of 2006.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11. COMMUNICATION

Jon reiterated that communication to members is the key issue at present. Robert will let Jon know when the next letter is going out – and we requested that we have a detailed plan of work with time-scales, e.g. date which tee is being treated and date expected to be completed. As with any plan it is subject to change due to the weather or other factors, but Jon stressed that it was essential for an initial plan to be published.

12. MEMBERS HELPING ON THE COURSE

The initial suggestion had been that members would help voluntarily on the course, perhaps with drinks/sandwiches afterwards. A bar levy or vouchers could have been given. However, it would appear that some members would expect payment at quite a high rate. If members want to volunteer to help this would be welcomed.

13. Oak Park are now using the same supplier for bread products as Sherfield Oaks.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, 9 November 2005 at 3.30 p.m.