

RMGC Policies & Procedures

Policy #16: Golf Course Management

Chapter 1: Executive Summary

Over the years, the Royal Malta Golf Club has invested considerably in the overall maintenance and upgrading of the golf course at Marsa. The investment has made an effective contribution to the present state of the golf course. At the time of writing, it is considered that the golf course has achieved a *grade 3* status. In order that the Club would strategically continue progressing with the aim to achieve higher standards, in line with recommended golf course management practices, a '***Golf Course Management Policy***' is being developed.

This policy document primarily focuses on the overall management of the golf course in terms of:

- the day-to-day management of the golf course operations and related activities;
- a mid- to long-term strategic plan and applicable procedures pertaining to the management and maintenance of the golf course.

Therefore, this document shall ensure:

1. that the golf course is managed and maintained in a professional manner and in line with the procedures set in this document;
2. tees, fairways, greens, bunkers and other golf course related areas are maintained on the basis of the specifications as contained in this document;
3. procurement of materials and equipment shall conform to recommendations as outlined in this document;
4. continuity, from one committee to another is maintained; and
5. at the same time, reduces the possibilities of individuals to create short-term measures and decisions, which in the long run can have adverse impact on the management of the golf course.

As expected, this policy document will be reviewed periodically over the coming years, as targets and objectives prevailing to that period in time are set-up and eventually met. However, once this '***Golf Course Management Policy***' document is formulated and approved it must be inviolate. Any changes will be initiated by the Greens Committee

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after having in-depth consultations with the Club's professional body and/or advisors and following this it will have to be approved by a formal resolution of the Board of Management.

This '***Golf Course Management Policy***' was formulated by the Golf Course Consultant and the Greens Committee and was presented to the Board of Management for approval.

Adopted as Bye-Law #1 at the AGM on 21st June 2001

Updated at the EGM on 5th December 2013

Created as Policy #16 at the AGM on 21st June 2018.

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Chapter 2: Definitions

The objectives of this policy document will alter over the coming years as targets are met and new aims prepared. However, the overall objectives will remain essentially the same, that is, to ensure that the facility is kept in a desirable condition, for as long as the weather conditions allow.

- **The Putting Surface**

The intention is to provide a true, firm, fast surface that will hold a well struck shot from a tightly mown area. The majority of the surface should contain those plants which meet these objectives throughout the year. They should also have qualities such as drought and disease resistance, quick establishment and acceptable recovery rates, can withstand close mowing and must also present good colour. With these aims in mind it is obvious that this environment will need careful and curative management such as fertilising, top dressing aeration, scarification, watering, as well as fungal, pest and weed control.

- **Surrounds and Approaches**

Another area which demands high quality turf. The golfer should be able to putt or chip a shot from the surrounds and therefore the quality objectives are much the same (although less intensive) as for the putting surface. They must (wherever possible) extend at least one mower's width from the perimeter of the green, keeping to the same contours defined by the existing green shape. The approaches are an area of turf whose quality should be of a calibre intermediate to surround and fairway. This area may extend up to twenty metres in front of the green and is from where mainly chip or run up shots will be played. Although of a lesser quality than the surrounds these areas will still be intensively managed.

- **Fairways**

The most important characteristic here is drought resistance. Traditionally built on areas of low fertility, grass plant content is of great importance. All maintenance operations should therefore be with this in mind. Plants must also have the ability to quickly regenerate. Playing characteristics for these areas should include firmness and the ability to be able to strike the ball from a tightly mown surface. The shape and contours of the fairway should take into consideration two conditions, the original architect's view (ie bunker placement humps and hollows, and strategic tree or feature placement) and also variable widths at set distances from the tee. The latter is designed to encourage the longer hitters to be more accurate from the tee while giving the shorter hitting players a wider target (see Fairways in the management policy section for exact specification)

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- **Semi-Rough**

These areas give an intermediate zone between fairway and the rough. They should extend approximately three to four metres (wherever possible) from the edge of the fairway and should follow the existing contours. They should penalise the shot which has only just failed to stay on the fairway and the grass quality should ensure that the shot is of variable difficulty.

- **Tees**

Approximately twenty five percent of golf is played from the tees so their importance should not be underestimated. They should present a firm level surface with correct orientation to help indicate the direction in which the hole is to be played. Size is important for tees and wherever possible should meet the correct specification in order to avoid excessive wear. Another primary factor is the grass quality. Good recovery and establishment rates are necessary if the required standard is to be maintained.

- **Bunkers**

Bunkers are an integral part of golf strategy and aesthetics. They also function to provide depth perception, protect tight green-tee areas by preventing a ball bouncing onto a tee and into players, catch wayward shots which may otherwise result in an unplayable lie, lost ball or an out of bounds penalty and also direct traffic patterns from one area to another. There are no prescribed limits to the shape and size of bunkers, therefore, specific dimensions and placement should be the result of a course architect's imagination and artistry. The depth of sand within the bunker must conform to the correct specification as must the percentage of particle size and also the pH value.

- **Trees, Copses, Hedges and Boundaries**

The areas where trees' copses should be situated will form part of the 'alternation and improvement plan'. The ideal species are defined as being the oak, olive, washingtonians palm, pine trees and the big ficus.

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Chapter 3: Course Management Policies

- **Fairways**

1. The height of cut will vary from 13mm to 18mm depending on environmental conditions.
2. Scarification of these areas will be done during Spring and Summer months to stimulate and increase growth of bermuda grass for the winter season.
3. Aeration will in the main be achieved by coring, although some solid tining and slicing may also take place.
4. Chemical treatment will only take place when absolutely necessary and cultural and environmental control will of course be given priority.
5. Divot filling will be needed particularly in areas of intense play. This will be achieved with a suitable sand/seed mix as directed by the Course Superintendent.
6. It would be highly recommended that fertilising will concentrate on introducing nutrients in the soil or foliar feeding depending on seasonal needs of Bermuda grass or the Perennial Ryegrass overseeding for Winter play.
7. The shape and size of any one fairway will be defined by the existing features and for guideline purposes the attached diagrams will form the basis of this document.
8. Weed killing programme through selective herbicide will be an ongoing process from year-to-year and suited to meet the prevailing conditions.

- **Semi Rough**

The height of cut must be between 22mm and 35mm. As the golf course area does not permit the inclusion of *rough*, the other areas, excluding greens, tees and fairways, will be considered as *semi-rough*. Cutting frequencies will depend on the seasons.

- **Tees**

Generally a tee should provide 300 square metres of area if a shot is to be played with a short or mid-iron or 250 square metres of space if a long iron or wood will be used. However, due to space constraints at the golf course, the size of the tees will vary according to the site and space available for the particular tee. The objective will be to increase the existing areas thus bringing up the existing areas to desired standards. Tee blocks should be moved at least three times a week (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday).

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Divotting of the tees will be carried out on a Monday morning with a suitable sand/seed mixture. The height of cut for these areas should be in the region of 9mm to 16mm on the playing surface and 22mm to 35mm on the tee surrounds and banks. The latter ensures greater wear tolerance, definition and orientation. All other aspects of tee management should follow recommended guidelines as per USPGA specifications.¹

- **Bunkers**

The bunkers should be raked a minimum of three times a week (Monday, Thursday and Friday). The edging of the bunkers will take place monthly in the growing season and as needed during the Winter months. In addition, chemical treatment (growth retardant) of the grass banks of the bunkers will be applied twice a year to slow down the growth of the grass, hence reducing maintenance works. Any more remedial work (such as sand splash removal) forms part of a Spring work programme and will be scheduled in at the appropriate time. Rakes will be provided for golfers to use and keep the surface in good order. The ideal bunker should contain a sand depth of approximately 100mm in the base. It should be stressed that only 25mm of that sand depth should have a fine tilth creating a soft surface. The remainder should have a sound structure creating a firm base from which the shot can be played.

- **Trees' Copses, Hedges and Boundaries**

Strategic trees that effect vision and the line of play will need careful pruning on a yearly basis as directed by the Course Superintendent as well as accurate planning when considering new planting. As existing eucalyptus trees die of, these will be replace with one of the species mentioned in Chapter 2.

The existing oleander and other similar bushes will be removed and transplanted to the boundaries' areas. Indigenous trees will instead be planted to replace the bushes and to suite the environment of the course.

¹ InterNet Site – USPGA www.uspga.com.....

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Chapter 4: Schedules

- **Machinery**

The Club has been very mindful of the need to provide adequate modern machinery in order that we should meet our objectives. Our aim is to run a replacement plan, which will ensure that our fleet remains current and therefore secures quality performance, at the same time taking into consideration the Club's financial and golf course objectives.

Therefore, it is recommended that the life span of our course related machinery is limited to no more than seven years, and provision is made for replacement accordingly.

An up to date machinery inventory list should always be available and updated on a year-to-year basis and kept at the club's secretary office. For cost efficiency it should be the club's policy to procure cutting machinery from reliable suppliers and retain the same manufactures thus ensuring commonality among the inventory of equipment. As a policy, all preventative maintenance should be carried out in-house and as much unscheduled repairs as skills allow. This keeps expenditure to a minimum and at the same time builds a broad base for employees. All machinery will only be used as recommended by the manufacturers and any mechanical operation which takes place will have passed recommended set up procedures prior to use.

An up to-date inventory list is attached herewith.

- **Compound and Buildings**

For any golf club to run efficiently it must provide an area for the safe and secure storage of all machinery and materials. This area should contain facilities such as workshops for the repair and servicing of all in-house machinery; tool rooms for the storage of all ancillary equipment, wash/restroom for employees, correct storage for all dangerous materials such as fuel and chemicals, soil and sand bays for the storage of bulk materials and an approved soak-away for the disposal of chemical tank and fuel contaminated washings. Additional space should be included for the winter storage and maintenance of items such as course furniture, etc. The facility must also ensure the safe and secure handling of materials while unloading and also ease of access.

- **Pathways**

Modern golf and its appeal have ensured that there is a need in certain situations to provide artificial desire lines which take players from one part of the course to another. These should always be kept to a minimum and the materials used to construct these pathways should wherever possible blend in with the surrounding environment.

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Also to be taken into account when choosing a suitable material is the likelihood of that material to cause damage to machinery.

For the purpose of constructing pathways the local sand and quarter inch hard gravel will be used.

- **Information Signs and Course Furniture**

Information signs advising golf course related instructions, e.g. the use of temporary greens, will be displayed as early as possible on any one specific day. Some of this information will only be available after a course inspection and after the correct communications have taken place.

Other course information, e.g. GURs, free drops and directional signs, will be displayed as necessary and when required. Every endeavour should be made to make use of natural golf course materials, e.g. wooden logs and curved and/or burnt instructions on the respective log, rather than making use of plastic materials.

As well as notices on the course, temporary local rules will be posted on the Club's notice boards.

During the winter months it may be necessary to create temporary traffic routes for the protection of certain playing surfaces. These will be marked by stranded rope and stakes or blue lines marked on the turf. These areas then become temporary desire lines and will be in place for as long as the ground conditions dictate.

- **Nurseries**

The club will maintain turf nurseries for both fairway and greens' quality turf. The size of the fairway quality nursery will be not less than 600 sq meters, with the greens' quality turf being the equivalent of two good-sized greens.

The turf nurseries will be situated in an area that does not ordinarily interfere with normal golf play practices, and will be fully irrigated.

Likewise, the club will maintain an area specifically cultivated and kept as a tree nursery. The tree nursery will be situated in an area that does not ordinarily interfere with normal golf play practices, and will be fully irrigated.

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Chapter 5: Course General

This section of the policy document is designed to clarify the safeguarding of our objectives during periods of high wear and inclement weather.

- **Course Closure**

The course should only be closed due to wetness or high winds creating hazardous conditions. The Course Superintendent will close portions of the course for chemical spraying to meet re-entry requirements should it be required.

The decision to close the course will be made at the earliest possible moment and will be the result of discussions between the Course Superintendent, Chairman of Greens, or if they are unavailable, their appointed deputies.

After closure, the course condition will be reviewed hourly (if necessary) or as soon as possible if more remedial work has been required. The decision to re-open the course will be made by the above-mentioned group.

- **Tees and Use of Caddie Cars and Trolleys**

When necessary the Course Superintendent in consultation with the Chairman of the Greens may opt to erect temporary tees with the aim to safeguard the wear and tear of proper tees.

The use of caddie cars is subject to obtaining permission from the Club committee (as per club rules). The use of trolleys and/or caddie cars will only be limited during the most severe ground conditions. The decision to ban trolleys and caddie cars will be taken by the Course Superintendent after a course inspection has taken place. The correct communications will then follow to all relevant parties and the decision reversed as and when conditions dictate.

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Chapter 6 Conclusion

- **Monitoring**

This policy document will be under constant review by the Course Superintendent and Greens Committee. Any areas of conflict arising from these reviews will initially be resolved within the policy's specific guidelines. If that should fail to obtain the desired results a report will be made to the Chairman of Greens who will present the problem to the Board of Management. This should ensure correct direction and continuity.

- **Professional Advice**

While the Board of Management fully recognise the efficiency and professionalism of the existing staff, it has been agreed that the use of consultants or contractors may be necessary when considering certain specific objectives. These specialists have already been successfully employed by the Club to produce reports on emotive subjects such as agronomy, irrigation, future construction/alteration projects and conservation. These reports form the basis of our objective and are then organised by the staff to meet the needs of the Club as a whole.

- **Finance**

The Greens Department must work within the financial budgeting and control systems employed throughout the Club's various activities

- **Future Course Development**

All future course developments/improvements should be carried out specifically according to a document or plan known as the Course Development Policy. This policy, once formulated, will be a 'rolling' plan, amended year-to-year, and approved by the Board of Management and presented to the Membership at a general meeting.