

discovering their roots

After ten years trying to produce root growth on a new green, Stratford upon Avon Golf Course have finally made a breakthrough and discovered the first strong, well developed white roots in the soil.

CHARMIAN ROBINSON reports

STRATFORD upon Avon Golf Club course was officially opened on the 27th April 1928 by Samuel Ryder - donator of the famous Ryder Cup and Captain of the club in 1929/30.

The course was designed by the five times Open Champion J H Taylor, who said in his original report that the subsoil was ideal - 'You can play 365 days a year in your slippers'. Which was likely the case until ten years ago when they built the new green.

"When I joined the club six years ago", said Howard Middlebrook, Course Manager at Stratford GC, "I was told about the complete lack of root establishment on this green. I believed that there must be a way of rejuvenating the soil to promote healthy and sustainable grass."

"We Verti-drained twice a year with ½" and ¾" tines, we brought in an Aeration specialist to blast air into the soil sub structure, we have tried using a drill and fill method in the Autumn expecting the

results to show up clearly by the following Spring. But there was nothing, no root growth at all."

"During 2006 to 2007 we used 1" tines with 2" spacings across the green filling down to a depth of 12" with Access. Still no white roots appeared. There was absolutely nothing to hold the soil together."

Vitax Ltd - renowned suppliers of professional fertilisers / pesticides and applied products to the sport and amenity industry, recommended that Howard talk to ORM Professional Products who produce a range of wholly organic probiotic soil treatments developed to promote biological activity in the soil, suppress nematodes, encourage nutrient uptake and most importantly promote greater root development and sward density.

Like so many apparently 'alternative' remedies, ORM were considered a last resort and Howard agreed to trial the product by dividing the green into four equal sections:



Howard Middlebrook

Control, Vermi T, Vermi Pro and Vermi T and Pro combined. The products were applied fortnightly and normal greenkeeping maintenance programmes continued.

28/01/2008

- Areas 1 and 2 - application of Vermi Pro compost (full tub)
- Areas 2 and 4 - application of Vermi T 2 litres diluted in 20 litres of water.
- Area 3 Nothing

18/2/2008

- Verti drained green 2" centres 10" deep...

26/2/2008

- Hollow Tined and over seeded green 4" deep 2" centres, then top dressing applied

ONE month after the initial application Stratford Golf Club reported that they had up to 2½" of root growth in area 2.



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Howard Middlebrook, Course Manager, Stratford upon Avon GC

“When we saw the first roots we were absolutely delighted, it meant that at last we were going in the right direction and we now knew that we would be successful. Although some roots were found in area 1 the best results were in area 2 which had Vermi T and Vermi Pro applied.”

“Based on these indications we re-applied Vermi T and Vermi Pro to the whole green and for the first time in the history of this green we have substantial, 8-10” roots which look strong and healthy” said Howard.

“At this point they are still in the infant stages, but I can’t emphasise enough the significance of these individual root structures, it is real genuine progress.”

Clive Pearson, Sales Manager for ORM Professional Products said, “These products are not new, but like many alternative approaches to existing problems; it takes a leap of faith to try something different. We know the probiotic activities of our Vermi T and Vermi Pro work using nature’s own mechanisms to feed the soil. They

are simple but extremely effective tools to aid the greenkeeper in his maintenance programme.”

ORM Professional Products provide a natural alternative to conventional fertilisers and soil and growing media improvers that also offers suppression of pests and diseases.

Extensive research and trials carried out in the UK and Ireland have produced significant data

demonstrating the effectiveness of the unique properties of the ORM product range.

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Howard Middlebrook and Clive Pearson of ORM examine the root structures