



Golf News

COURSE CLOSURES IN FEBRUARY



Dear Members,

We write today to update you all on discussions that have taken place about our courses and how best we can ensure the same quality we have enjoyed over the past two seasons. These conversations were prompted by a review of course usage in 2021 and the evidence that the courses benefitted from periods of enforced closure relating to COVID restrictions. As well as providing the courses with a break from use, those closures also enabled maintenance work to take place which is not possible while the courses are open.

At our Committee Meeting held on Monday 10 January, we discussed at some length the benefits of closing each course for a period of time in February this year to allow for both courses to rest and for maintenance to take place, even though this would result in some inconvenience for members. The result of those discussions follows below.

During the enforced closures last year, we were able to complete both verti-draining work and over-seeding work on our fairways and we established that for each month of closure we limited divot damage by circa 40,000 divots per month. (4,000 rounds each month, 10 divots per round). At the same time, we discussed course usage in 2021 and can report that 10 per cent more rounds were played last year than in any year since we started recording the figures and that was notwithstanding the 11-week closure from January through March. 66,000 rounds were played in just nine months during 2021, against an average of 60,000 rounds per year over the last six years.

Having reviewed the benefits of a winter maintenance window as demonstrated last summer, and lowering the number of divots, trolley scars and general wear and tear that requires time to recover, it has been decided to close each course for a period of two weeks during February this year. The Coronation Course will be closed from **Tuesday 1 February** for two weeks, with the Old Course remaining open for play. That will be followed by the Old Course closure from **Tuesday 15 February** for two

weeks, during which time the Coronation Course will be open. On **Tuesday 1 March** both courses will reopen to hopefully better weather and brighter days.

We understand that this is a new initiative here at the Club and that there will be an impact on course availability for all. This has again been discussed with the following agreed to help alleviate the perceived challenges.

All Golf Pass Holder events will remain for the month and will be switched to whichever course is open at that time. This will include roll-ups, reserved slots for ladies' golf on Tuesdays and a weekend day, competitions that are scheduled to take place and priority bookings for Golf Pass Holders on the weekend mornings. In addition, Golf Pass Holders will be given a third priority booking day on Fridays, which will mirror the Saturday and Sunday booking rights, with the addition of Five Day Pass Holders of course.

As noted, if we have a competition currently scheduled for the Old Course, when that course will now be closed, that event will take place on the Coronation Course instead. The same will apply for matches, roll-ups and the **7.50am** two ball knockout tee time. I can also confirm that our knockout competitions due to commence on **Tuesday 1 February** will be given an extended first round deadline date to reflect the fact that course access will be reduced during February. Stuart Brahams will outline these once the draws have been made.

Having reviewed the details and scheduled fixtures, we can confirm that a total of 19 Golf Pass Holder events will remain on the fixture list and they will be a combination of competitions, reserved slots and roll-ups, plus the new three days of priority bookings that has been agreed. Outside of these Golf Pass Holder only tee times, the rules for general booking will remain.

There are two further changes that will be implemented during these closures which related to the size of group you can play in and guests coming to join you at the Club. Guests will be restricted to after **11.00am** only, on all days of the week. We are keen to allow our members to book the prime morning slots for their golf but continue to allow guests later in the day. Group sizes will not be enforced as a hard rule, however we do ask that players make every effort to play in three and four balls where possible to maximise the number of players on the open course. Additionally, should we see the need to 'pair up' groups in order to best utilise our availability we will indeed do so. If this does happen, you will be contacted by Golf Reception to inform you of such pairing.

Some of you may ask how much of a benefit these maintenance closures will be at a time of year when growth is minimal and this matter was discussed at length. It was confirmed by our Course Manager that whilst seed may not germinate at this time of year it will remain in the ground for a time when the temperatures rise. It was also confirmed that the ability to aerate our turf during the closures will result in a healthier sward as we approach the season, just as we saw last year. Both of these works are invasive and need to be completed without golfers present, which is why a course closure is the only real solution. For additional information on the course works, please **click here** to read what is planned.

You may also be wondering whether these benefits could be achieved without closing each course for two weeks. We have looked carefully at other possible ways of achieving the results we are seeking but unfortunately the only way of carrying out the required works, limiting the divot and footfall damage and giving all members an opportunity to play in a normal manner during this period, is to close one course at a

time. If we were to allow carry only that would prevent many from playing at all and would not allow a suitable window for work to be completed. Other types of closure, one day a week on each course for example, would result in not only a very interrupted approach for the team to complete the work but would also mean members would be playing on a recovering course for a prolonged period of time.

All on the Committee understand that this is something new for the courses here at Woodcote Park but the decision has been motivated by our desire to provide you all with the best possible courses for our golfing season. We are committed to think differently and act accordingly as the evidence we have experienced over the last two seasons requires a change to our approach. We have all witnessed the courses becoming wetter this winter due to fewer cold days and longer periods of rain and it would be remiss of us not to consider how best we can allow the courses to recover and shine for the coming year.

The inconvenience we will all experience now, during a month which is generally not very attractive for golf with usage correspondingly lower, will yield significant reward for all golfers in the following months. The closures, two weeks on each course, will result in 20,000 fewer divots to re-grow and will give pitch marks on the greens time to heal back over. Most importantly, it will allow the team to complete some essential maintenance work to help us reach, and hopefully exceed, the standards we showcased last summer.

Our courses are our biggest asset and need to be managed accordingly. We hope we can count on your support and understanding of why we have made this decision and our efforts to mitigate some of the demand issues we are likely to encounter.

Sincerely

Philip Worthington

Director of Golf

Giles Harper

Chairman of Golf

LADIES' AND MEN'S ORDER OF MERIT COMPETITION



The Order of Merit Competition is open to all Golf Pass Holders with an WHS handicap. The race for the 2022 Order of Merit Competition will start with the Men's Division 1, 2 and 3 Stableford this **Saturday 22 January**.

Points are awarded to the top 25 places in the competitions included in the Order of Merit. Only your best eight results in these competitions count towards the Order of Merit title. A minimum of 30 players must play in a competition for this competition to be included in the Order of Merit.

The Ladies' Order of Merit will commence this **Sunday 23 January**.

*Monthly updates on Golf Pass Holders' progress in the Men's and Ladies' 2022 Order of Merit can be found under the Order of Merit section on **Intelligent Golf**.*

KNOCKOUT COMPETITIONS



The final day to sign up for knockout competitions listed below is **Friday 28 January**. The knockout draws will be live by the beginning of February.

All Golf Pass Holders must have three Club competitions on their record to be eligible to play in these Honours Board competitions. If a new member that has transferred in from another club, they must have a full complement of 20 scores on their WHS Handicap Index record or have played in three Club competitions to be eligible for Honour Board competitions. Golf Pass Holders who do not meet the eligibility criteria for Honours Board events will not be able to enter Knockout Competitions until the criteria are met.

You should not enter if you are away for more than three consecutive weeks during the period of the competition. It is a Golf Pass Holder's responsibility to make sure you have entered for these knockout competitions. Please check your **Intelligent Golf** homepage.

Tiger Cup 2022 (Handicap Index 0 to 18.4, men only)

Angora Cup 2022 (Handicap Index 18.5 and above, men only)

Veterans' Cup 2022 (no Handicap Index restriction, men only aged 60 and above on the closing date of entry)

Better Ball Knockout 2022 (no Handicap Index restriction, men only). Please enter as a pair. Single players are welcome to enter, with the aim to be paired with another Golf Pass Holder. If you would like to do this, please contact **Golf Operations**.

Mixed Knockout 2022 (Handicap Index up to 54.0, men and ladies). Enter as a pair. Single players are welcome to enter, with the aim to be paired with another Golf Pass Holder. If you would like to do this, please email **Golf Operations**.

WELCOME IAN LEWIS, PGA ASSISTANT PROFESSIONAL



Welcome to Ian Lewis who joined us at Woodcote Park on Monday as a PGA Coaching Professional. He comes with a wealth of experience having established a successful junior coaching Academy at Knole Park Golf Club in Kent.

Ian's continued passion for coaching stems from a successful amateur career in which he crossed paths with many established and talented coaches, most notably the ex-Ryder Cupper and Scotsman the late George Will. George really helped develop Ian's passion and understanding of the golf swing which he used to great prevail winning numerous amateur club, county and professional competitions. These experiences convinced Ian to further explore and develop his knowledge for the game.

Subsequently, in 2009 he became a qualified PGA professional.

Ian continues to be a keen student of the game and is excited to be here at Woodcote Park to help develop a talented and thriving junior section.

IMPROVE YOUR GAME



Package Available until Thursday 31 March

Are you looking to improve your game this year? We have put together a specialist package that includes an overview of your game, swing and stance over the course of four one-to-one lessons with a PGA Professional at the exclusive price of £120.00.

Please note that this package is to be purchased and all four lessons redeemed by **Thursday 31 March**.

For further information and to book, please email **Golf Operations**.

PREMIUM GOLF ACCESSORIES



Available Now

If you are looking to upgrade your equipment, we are here to help you choose from the best premium products available. Choose from a variety of Bushnell and Garmin GPS watches and range finders. We even have Theragun therapy devices to give muscle relief after a tough round.

Please note that our Bushnell range is only available in-store in the Club Shops and not online.

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