

Wow time flies bye oh so quickly! The 2025 season is nearly over! Leagues now finished, finals day come and gone, evenings drawing in very fast and days and nights cooler.

The 2025 season with reference to your green... well the green has been decent all season, but even with the hot weather the green has never been very quick. It has been a decent speed, and most of the time there has been a decent draw on both hands, and not very many runs. Yes if you go a bit too wide it hangs out but hey ho nothing is perfect.

So the question is why was the green speed not very quick when we had a drought! Well honestly I cannot be certain, but I think one cause may have been your green is not played on enough. We need more active members and it may well improve!

I often just go on about thatch levels, fertilisers, organic options, etc... So this time I thought I may bore you , dear reader, with some information on the grass seed we use.

The history of fine turf grass seed is.... Well your green was laid using the infamous sea washed, sheep grazed Cumberland Turf. This is what it says, it came from the wet Cumberland coast and was a natural grass turf that had evolved over the years to grow just behind the sand dunes, but before the agricultural fields. Now we refer to this as "The Links", they now are often used for some of the most famous golf courses in the world, the so called Links Courses. Most of the grasses that made up this Cumberland turf were natural Fescues, such as Timothy Meadow Fescue, which was used in farming in my youth!

Skip on a few years and World War 2 came to an end, but war always accelerates invention for example the huge use of small drones in the Ukraine war has completely changed tactics for all nations. WW 2 was no exception and the use and design of aviation changed the way forever. What has this fact got to do with amenity grass? Well in the late 1940s and early 1950s the world map was still dominated by the British Empire. The Brits liked their sports and along with cricket and other sports, lawn bowls was played in South Africa, Australia, NZ amongst many others. Also air travel became more common, cutting the traveling time from a leisurely cruise of up to six weeks in both directions, down to up to three days to get to Australia and New Zealand. Some of the top bowlers from the UK were very interested in playing in these far off lands after hearing how wonderful they were from troops, especially from the so called ANZAC countries.

They came back with tales of very fast greens made up using grass varieties called Bent grass. Bent grass seed was imported and sown into golf greens, bowling greens and other amenity grass, and the results were dramatic with green speed improved. These Bent grasses were often referred to as Colonial Bents.

Skip on to the mid 1960s and we then saw improved Bent varieties coming onto the market. It takes around 10 years of breeding, multiplying from the initial cross breeding to the seed becoming commercially available. These days it has been reduced by flying seeds from Europe to Southern hemisphere countries so that they can have two summers in a calendar year.

Now Bents, as with all grass varieties, have been improved to give a longer growing season, better disease resistance and deeper rooting. So how do I select what grasses to use to try to improve your green?

Ultra fine ryegrasses give the longest growing season, and are the most hard wearing, but they are not the deepest rooting and are hungry for fertilizers.

Fescues are the deepest rooting, less reliant on fertilizers, and have a shorter growing season.

Lastly the Bents give a very dense sward, good disease resistance and good green speeds, but they do produce thatch very easily.

So over the last few years I have been using a mixture of 30% Rye, 50% Fescues and 20% Bents. The percentages are based on weight and are a little misleading! Rye is a large seed so you get less seeds per kilo, Fescues are smaller and the Bents are very small, like poppy seeds. This year I felt we had enough rye in your green, so I went for a Fescue/Bent mixture. For the future..from speaking with some golf greenkeepers a lot of them are using pure Bents to try to improve grass density and green speed and maybe that will be the way to?

Lastly, and thank you for your patience if you have read this far, your green really suffered from a two pronged attack this very mild autumn, with various diseases running wild and some areas struggling with those pesky leather jackets. Hopefully I can overcome these problems and improve the green before the start of the 2026 season.

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish all our members a very Happy New Year and look forward to seeing you at the next social event that a few members work hard to put together. These are not only fun but contribute to club funds to keep membership fees as low as possible.

