

Golf Course Happenings – 1/5/25

Happy New Year!

Winter came early this year. By the beginning of January, we have already nearly surpassed last winter's total snowfall. We love snow coverage—as long as it sticks around for an extended period. Snow insulates the turf plant, providing protection from harsh winds, desiccation, foot traffic, and keeping the plant slightly warmer than if it were exposed to winter air.

The challenge with snow coverage comes when it quickly thaws and refreezes, covering the ground in ice. Thankfully, we've only experienced substantial ice coverage for a handful of days this winter. Bentgrass can tolerate up to 100 days under ice, but that's not a limit we'd like to test if it can be avoided.

The most impactful investment made this offseason on the golf course, however, has been tree work. We have been incredibly aggressive this winter, as frozen and minimally snow-covered conditions allow for easy access of heavy machinery onto the course. By the end of today, we will have removed deadwood and artistically pruned 62 trees, along with the complete removal of four dead trees over the past four weeks. In addition, we have 8–12 more trees scheduled to be pruned before reopening.

This work has a profound visual impact on the golf course, but it also provides many additional benefits. Safety is our top priority, and removing deadwood and broken branches significantly reduces risk. Increased sunlight, improved air movement, and enhanced overall turf health are also major advantages. We also believe that if your ball lands in a fairway landing zone or a fairway bunker, you should not be further penalized by being forced to hit around an overgrown branch. Eliminating these unfair, unintentional hazards will also help improve pace of play.

We are currently in the final stages of preparing a long-term tree care plan aimed at bringing the entire property to a “routine maintenance” level. At that point, all safety and turf/tree health concerns will have been addressed, allowing us to focus on regular pruning to maintain both visual appeal and architectural intent. By the time the golf course reopens in the spring, we will have assessed all “needs” and made a significant dent in the “wants” list as well.

Tree work is being prioritized in key pockets around the golf course based on importance and necessity. We anticipate that within the next two winters, we will achieve a uniform standard across the entire property. At that point, we can begin directing resources toward other aspects of our long-term improvement plan.

Thanks to Jeff and Pat for posting photos online and on Instagram. While they look great, photos don't do the work nearly enough justice. I'm very excited for everyone to see the difference in person this spring!

Best,
Evan Davis