



February Newsletter

2012 PRICES

Mack Golf have now published their pricing information for the 2012 season. Prices are as follows:

7 Day Season Ticket - £495

4 Day Season Ticket - £285

Saturday Green Fee - £4 (2010 seniors with a 4 day season ticket).

The club have been negotiating for some time for any rises to be kept to a minimum and the above represents the best deal that could be obtained for our members. Although it is disappointing to report any increase given the general economic climate, it is also clear that the course will need further investment to bring about much needed improvements. The total cost of being a member at Blackpool Park (under £600 for a full member) remains very competitive when compared with the alternatives.

Mack Trading have also provided the Full Council with a 3 year plan of activities on the course and the liaison group will be tracking progress against this plan during the coming season.

HEATING UPDATE

Mack Trading and Blackpool Council have agreed a way forward to finance the required work to re plumb the whole system and replace the existing boiler. Work is now scheduled to start in mid February. The Full Council would like to thank all members for their patience during the protracted negotiations and would emphasise that all this work will be at no cost to the club.

IMPORTANT CHANGES TO COMPETITION ADMINISTRATION FOR 2012

As previously notified in the December newsletter, the competition calendar for 2012 is complete and has been agreed with Mack Golf. Full details are posted on the clubs website and in the porch. Members will be pleased to see that we continue to offer the full programme of events with no significant changes from last year's programme.

For Saturday competitions only there will be changes to the way in which player's book in advance and to how they register and pay the entry fee on the day. These changes are necessary to prevent many of the problems that were evident on Saturdays last season. Please read the FAQ section below for a better understanding of the reasons for the changes.



The following process will be introduced starting with booking for the Cartmell QR2 competition on April 7th with bookings opening on Thursday 29th March.

Rules for Saturday Competitions

1. A total of 40 tee times will be allocated for the competition. This accommodates 160 players (last seasons average was 147).
2. To enter the competition, players must play on one of the allocated competition times.
3. Times will be available spread throughout the day as follows:
 - 2 times at 6:28
 - a block of 10 times starting at 07:08
 - a block of 10 times starting at 10:28
 - a block of 15 times starting at 13:08
 - a single time at 16:04
 - two times starting at 17:00
4. To book a tee time a player will book for themselves and up to 3 others on the Thursday evening 9 days prior to the competition using the computer (this will be supervised and there will be a ticketing system as at present).
5. The competition booking will remain active for a further 7 days, i.e. until the Thursday prior to the competition. Players not allocated a time on the Thursday can then book themselves into any gaps at any time in the following week. Players booked in who find they are unable to play must cancel their booking to free up a slot for another member.
6. On the Thursday night prior to the competition the bookings will close and a start sheet will be produced and passed to the Mack Golf booking office.
7. On the Saturday, players must sign in for the competition using the computer rather than the existing manual sheet then proceed to the booking office.
8. Upon payment of the £2 entry fee the booking office staff will issue each player with a scorecard and register the round on their own system (swipe in).
9. Players not already booked into the competition may turn up on the day and take any available competition slot on a first come first served basis.
10. Following the round, players are required to enter their score, including NRs into the computer as they do presently.



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Q1. Why can't we just have one block like we used to?

A1. When Mack Golf took over the course our number one consideration was to ensure that our Saturday comps were still catered for and that everyone who wanted to play could play. Their number one requirement was to maintain some blocks of "prime time" tee times on Saturday for pay and play and in particular visiting parties.

Our membership has diverse requirements, some like to play early, some mid morning, some early afternoon and some later on. With only around 160 playing as a maximum it is not reasonable to request more than 40 times (last years average was only 147). We could easily negotiate a continuous block of 40 from 06:30 or from 12:00 but we would obviously alienate half our membership if either of these scenarios were put forward. The only sensible solution is to split our times into blocks so that all members can regularly get a game at roughly the time they like to play.

Q2. Are we giving Mack Golf too much?

A2. Prior to the invitation to tender in late 2009 we were locked in negotiations with the Borough Council about tee times for 2010. The council were adamant that things had to change in a major way and they were working towards much fewer tee times on a Saturday, changing finals to 18 holes and even counting competition entry fees as joint income in certain circumstances. Obviously we were resisting these changes but when the tender was announced the problem went away. They simply agreed to carry on as per the previous year. The point being that serious changes were going to come about whether Mack Golf took over or not. The situation we enjoyed for the previous 10-15 years was already over.

What we all want to see is a well maintained golf course. Years of negotiation with the Borough Council didn't achieve that. We all know also that serious investment is needed to get the course where we want it to be. That will not happen unless Mack Golf are able to make the course profitable. The clubs stance is that we will work with them to achieve that providing we can still operate the club and offer the programme of competition golf our members expect. Clearly that will involve give and take and some level of change was inevitable. Some would say we have given too much but we had to start somewhere. Last years agreement really was the very best deal we could get for our members. We now look to improve this year on year and the changes being implemented this year will put us in a much stronger negotiating position going forward.

Q3. Why can't I play any time I like if times are available?

A3. There are a number of reasons. Firstly, the club have negotiated 40 tee times based on our competition numbers and requirement. If players go out on different times it dilutes the figures and makes our figures disagree with Mack Golf's figures. This makes negotiation the following year more difficult and introduces the risk that our times are cut due to them being underutilised. Remember that the management above Maria will in all likelihood only look at numbers. Secondly, by having control of all the tee times using the computer we will be able to track the numbers much more accurately putting us in a stronger position for negotiation with the operators and ensure that players are not abusing the booking system and depriving other members of what are perceived as "good" times.



Finally, having a start sheet provided by the committee is actually a rule of golf that we have always turned a blind eye to in our qualifiers (though not for finals). In any competition players are supposed to stick to their allotted start time and group.

Q4. Won't players just book and not play without cancelling?

A4. A booking made through the computer (even if booked by a fellow player) will be taken as a firm commitment for that person to play. The rules clearly state that players are responsible for cancelling bookings if they find they can't play. The computer will be available until bookings close, after that they can be cancelled through the booking office or the secretary's office. There is really no excuse and the committee will monitor abuses of the system and take action against players found to be breaking these rules.

Q5. Will I be penalised for not going out in the rain?

A5. The committee will take a pragmatic view when it comes to bad weather. Clearly on a bad day the impact of people not turning up, or turning up and not going out in terms of other members getting a time is much less of an issue than on a decent day. Common sense will be applied in these situations.

Q6. Where do 4-day contract holders stand?

A6. It is important to recognise that we are all full members of this golf club. How we pay for our golf should not really enter into any debate about competitions. However there is a perception that senior 4 day contract holders who can play on Saturdays for a reduced green fee sometimes "cherry pick" weekends to play (e.g. subsidiaries). Of course there is nothing to stop a 7 day contract holder doing the same so in an attempt to counter this possible problem a new rule has been introduced saying that to win a prize in a subsidiary competition a player must have played in at least one of the qualifying rounds.

Q7. Is there an alternative?

A7. There are effectively two alternatives the club could employ given the requirement to play on our allotted competition times.

Firstly, we could leave the booking system as it is as a manual system with the Thursday draw continuing in its present form. This would cause many problems in managing changes to the bookings and maximising available times in the week leading up to the competition. The new process is more flexible and allows players to control their own bookings via the computer. For example, if your friend books the usual 4-ball but this is earlier than you want to play, there is nothing to stop you cancelling your slot and adding yourself to a 2 or 3 ball at a more convenient time freeing up your slot and leaving a 3 ball in the early time. Perhaps the whole group would split up for that week and fill in odd spaces later in the day. Scenarios like this are likely to be common and players have the flexibility within the slots still available to alter their booking until the bookings are closed and the start sheet produced. This flexibility should lead to more players playing at an acceptable time.

A second option has also been considered. The system can be set up so that the available competition times are in a series of blocks (say 5 times, 20 slots in total). Players then book on an individual basis and basically reserve a slot within the desired block. Once booked into a block a player is guaranteed a slot on one of the 5 tee times within that

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block. When bookings close a start sheet is produced with all the players in the block randomly drawn across the 5 times by the computer. Players would know their approximate time (to within 40 minutes) as soon as they book and their exact time on the Thursday prior to the competition.

The second option has a number of advantages. It means players get to play with different people every week which in turn creates a better social atmosphere in the club as more and more people get to know each other. It makes it very easy to integrate new members into competition play which has always been a problem for new members. Booking as individuals means that the system is even more flexible on an individual basis and a bigger percentage of members will play when they want to as you no longer have to compromise within a regular group.

This option has been considered at length and the committee have decided that it would be difficult to implement such a big change in one go. It will be simpler to get members used to using the computer first to operate a system that more or less aligns with the current manual system and then look at this again in the future. However, the committee would be very interested to hear member's views on the possible introduction of "drawn" competitions in the future.