

# Making better on a budget



**Peter Robin, Rigby Taylor Irrigation Product Manager, gives some excellent advice on making sure the money invested in your irrigation system is money well spent.**



Your irrigation system is one of the most important tools of your golf course. It can be one of your biggest headaches too if it is not up to scratch. If your irrigation system is doing okay then your fertiliser applications, grass seed sowing and all the rest of your maintenance can be utilised to their full potential. So if your club has told you they can't afford a new irrigation system within the next few years, how can you make your existing irrigation system better without emptying your club's bank account?

The first important factor is your irrigation pump station. Most old pumps I see on courses simply turn on (i.e. from zero to full speed in half a second) and off, often via a relay from the irrigation controller. This sudden full speed and then sudden full stop can cause huge shockwaves through your pipe system so if you're getting frequent pipe blow-outs, it's worth looking closely at your pump. A variable speed drive (VSD) dropped onto a pump will control the pump's frequency and provide soft start and soft stop, meaning the pump will slowly accelerate and decelerate, thus reducing those shockwaves.

Your VSD can also be set to operate at a specific pressure, reducing fluctuations in pressure that also cause undue stress. A variable speed drive will cost a few thousand pounds but is worth every penny. It can also save you money in kilowatts if you can operate the pump at a lower pressure. New pumps can be purchased with variable speed drives already built-in. Once out of the pump shed, your pipes are hugely important. If your pipe diameters are too small then all that pressure generated by your pump will be chewed up in friction, known as headloss. Wherever you have had lots of blowouts, replace your old PVC pipes

with new black PE (polyethylene) pipes. Your golf mainline should normally be 90mm diameter or bigger. Pipes within greens can be 63mm or 50mm, while in tees 50mm or even 32mm because your flow rates are often so much lower. If you're not sure, give us a call. Installing pipes is something you can do yourself which will save you money.

Onto the sprinklers. These can make or break your irrigation system and if you are getting lots of dry patch then take a close look at the coverage. Does each sprinkler produce a nice "curtain" of droplets across the entire throw length, or is most of the water landing near the end of the throw? If it's the latter then this shows that your sprinkler's flow rate is too high, or your water pressure is too low; and yes the two are interrelated.

You can reduce the size of the nozzles in your sprinklers; this will reduce the flow rate and can lead to an increase in water pressure. If you need new sprinklers then the Rain Bird 751 has been proven for decades to provide optimal coverage of water across your green. If you can't afford a golf head (has a big flat top so you can find it easily) then you can use a sports rotor instead.



Irrigation controllers regulate the timing and amount of water to be applied



Rain Bird Falcon 6504

up to 200 solenoid stations.

You can add an IQ cartridge into this (it clips into the door of the controller) which allows you to turn stations on & off from your smart phone, plus you can manage the whole irrigation system programming from your office computer if it's online.

If you are at home and you remember at 9pm that you wanted to increase the run time of the irrigation system that night, you can pick up your smart phone and make the change. In addition, if you apply some granular fertiliser onto the green, you can just turn the sprinklers on from your phone to wash it in without opening up the valve box. This controller has proven its worth on many courses throughout the UK.

The Rain Bird Falcon 6504 is an industry favourite at an economic price and has well proven track record.

Onto your irrigation controller which you really can think of as the brain of your irrigation system. Controllers have come a long way over the past 20 years and most these days are decoder systems. The decoder acts as a switch and allows the irrigation solenoid cabling to be twin-core. This is a very practical method and means you can add a new solenoid station to the system by simply branching the existing closest twin core cable & adding a decoder, and then your solenoid valve.

Make sure you use proper cable connectors and if you have an old decoder system that is becoming "cantankerous" then change the controller out for a new one. However, you will need to change out all the decoders too because competition controllers don't usually talk to each other's decoders. The Rain Bird ESP-LXD wall-mount decoder controller is great for managing

At the start of 2018 Rigby Taylor was appointed the UK distributor for Rain Bird Golf irrigation and this was extended in 2019 to include the range of Rain Bird landscape irrigation. Well, we have grown since then!

You can now purchase pretty much everything you require for your irrigation system, from pipes to pumps to water storage tanks and everything in between, and of course all your Rain Bird irrigation gear. We can help you make the most of your irrigation system until you can afford to have a complete overhaul. If your club would like a new irrigation system installed from scratch then we can arrange for a professional independent irrigation consultant to visit and get the ball rolling. Talk to your Rigby Taylor area manager or contact us directly.

**www.rigbytaylor.com**  
 Peter Robin is the Irrigation Product Manager for Rigby Taylor Ltd



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