Rain Bird

Course Superintendent Steve Chappell.

it has been under the stewardship of
golfing world in 2017 and since then
remastered course was revealed to the
lakes to create a dramatically‑changed
redesigning and reconstructing greens,
the course to Championship length,
of specialists from 17 nations, extending
Howard and William Swan led a team
alongside the wooded Lake’s Course.

In Slovenia, dating back to 1937, and sits
destination courses.

picturesque tranquility of Royal Bled’s
Slovenia’s Julian Alps give way to the
climate, with summer temperatures
provision in place.

Location, location, location
North‑eastern Slovenia has a warm
Local specialists In‑Aqua’s water

Water task
Fine‑tuning Europe’s most
advanced irrigation systems

The majestic rise and fall of
Slovenia’s Julian Alps give way to the
picturesque tranquility of Royal Bled’s
destination courses.
The King’s is the oldest and largest
in Slovenia, dating back to 1937, and sits
alongside the wooded Lakes Course.

Over a three‑year period, architects
Howard and William Swan led a team
of specialists from 17 nations, extending
the course to Championship length,
redesigning and reconstructing greens,
tees and bunkers and adding 10 new
lakes to create a dramatically‑changed
layout. The strategically and skillfully
remastered course was revealed to the
golfing world in 2017 and since then
it has been under the stewardship of
Course Superintendent Steve Chappell.

Working together with our partners

location was key to putting the right
 provision in place.

Bird soil sensing system in Europe.
Sensors are located on each green,
measuring volumetric water content, soil
temperature and salinity.

“Irrigation is essential for sustained
plant health and that’s my priority,”
Steve Chappell explained. “2018 was
an evaluation season for us, learning
as much as we could from our readings
to ensure optimal turf health and
playability and reduce water costs.

With unpredictable weather and ET
rates as significant as they are here, it’s
a leap of faith letting technology make
those decisions.

In order to fully understand
the characteristics of the greens, we’ve had
to programme the sensors – train them,
by saturating each green then draining
and evaluating it, seeing how long it
takes to hydrate the profile and drain it
down. I varied the placement and depth
on the front nine holes, while they’re
set at a depth of 150mm and 250mm
on the back nine. It’s essential that we
can monitor moisture levels throughout
the profile. When hand‑watering,
readings are very different in the top
50‑70mm to those further down, hence
the varied placement. Rainfall can be
sporadic, so the weather station and
Rain Bird’s Rain Watch feature, where
rainfall is measured and deducted from
the irrigation programme, ensures the
course only receives what it needs.

“We now know that moisture
content of 13% at 50mm is optimal for
performance. Below 10%, the surface
is drying too much and we’re back to
hand‑watering. At 250mm depth, we’re
aiming to keep it at 15%. The sensors
keep us at that optimal point.

“Data feeds into my course
management reports, detailing our
water needs and usage. It also helps
with other turf management decisions,
such as when to apply nutrients when
coming out of winter.”

Looking ahead

“I’m looking to add maps to our
mobile interface for ease of sprinkler
testing, and add IC Connect to our
system, enabling us to receive data
from different sensors across the site
in real‑time, then monitor and control
of all aspects of the systems on both
courses from one Central Control. I also
plan to appoint an irrigation technician
to assume responsibility for what is, for
us, a critical asset. If you buy a fleet of
machinery you want a skilled mechanic
on your team to maintain it; irrigation
systems require the same if you want to
preserve and optimise your investment.

“Modern course management
requires us to combine our knowledge
and expertise with the new
technologies. It’s exciting and gives
us new opportunities to learn, adapt,
improve, share and collaborate for
everyone’s benefit.”

‘Modern course
management requires
us to combine our
knowledge and
expertise with the new
technologies...’