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"A PATCH OF GREEN"

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N N ************** . ***** 10 N 1 **** Season's Greetings and Best Wishes for the New Year * **Benham Chemicals** 44 3190 Martin Road *** Walled Lake, MI 48088 313/624-3200 ************* 1.

A New Turf Menace

A topic discussed frequently by Chicago area golf course superinten-dents is the USGA stimpmeter. The majority of the comments are negative and yet our local chapters and our National GCSAA are afraid to take a stand on the issue. As a concerned turfgrass manager, I am going to stick my neck out and comment on, the stimpmeter, which has become a thorn in the foot to many dedicated golf course superintendents. I realize I am not a million dollar touring pro, but I am a golf course superintendent who is charged with maintaining the playing field to make the game of golf possible. I doubt if this letter will have any bearing on the issue at all, but here I go! In 1976, the USGA first brought the stimpmeter to the attention of the golfing public during the telecast of the

U.S. OPEN. This introduction has been followed by a number of articles published in the USGA Green section Record and in other golfing magazines. These articles have professed the opinion that the faster the putting surface the higher the quality of the putting green. Charts and tables have accompanied these articles stating what the USGA feels to be desirable readings for quality putting greens. These articles, charts, table, stimpmeters and logic have gotten into the hands of the amateur, the low handicap country club members. All they feel they need is a stimpmeter and they think that they can judge quality putting turf. They have no agronomic knowledge of soils, turfgrass varieties, or stress conditions, but base their Continued Page 12

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN JOINING THE MICHIGAN AND BORDER CITIES GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION? FILL IN THE QUESTIONAIRE BELOW AND MAIL TO: CLEM WOLFROM DETROIT GOLF CLUB 530 Kendry Bloomfield Hills, MI 48013 Off. 345-4589, Res. 334-0140 DATE NAME ADDRESS . ZIP STATE CITY OR YOU MAY CONTACT THE NEXT GOLF COURSE SUPPLIER WHO CALL ON YOU AND GIVE HIM THE INFORMATION NEEDED FOR APPLICATION.

Thatch Control on Putting Greens

by J.L. Eggens, Associate Professor Horticultural Science University of Guelph

Thatch is a persistent problem on high maintenance turf areas subjected to compaction stress. Thatch accumulation is due to a reduction in the rate of decomposition of letter and reduction in earthworms and changes in microbial flora. Although thatch is not considered to be a primary causal factor in turf death, it is a major indirect contributor to poor turf quality, localized dry spots, scalping, increased disease and insect problems, increased winter injury (Beard 1973) and poor stands of overseeded grasses (Schmidt and Shoulders 1972).

Thatch control by cultural methods which do not injure the sward are preferred to mechanical thatch control programs such as vertical mowing and coring. Schmidt and Shoulders (1972) showed that Bermudagrass putting greens that did not receive cultivation had significantly less annual bluegrass than plots that had received cultivation treatments during periods of optimum annual bluegrass germination and establishment.

A study was conducted to evaluate the relative effectiveness of the usual thatch control practices utilized in Ontario and to assess the influence of these practices on the invasion of annual bluegrass into Penncross creeping bentgrass turf maintained as a putting green. The research was conducted from July 1976 to October 1979 on a 7-year-old Penncross creeping bentgrass sward grown on a sandy loam soil. When the thatch control treatments were begun, the thatch thickness was approximately 22 mm and relatively unifirm throughout the research area. The sward contained approximately 5% annual bluegrass uniformly distributed through the research area. The treatments included (1) vertical mowing weekly, (2) vertical mowing monthly, (3) vertical mowing monthly followed by topdressing, (4) coring monthly (5) coring monthly followed by topdressing, (6) topdressing monthly and (7) control plots which did not receive vertical mowing, coring or topdressing. Each main plot was split lengthwise for two nitrogen levels of 2 or 4 kg N/100 m² (4 or 8 lb N/1000 ft²) per growing season and split crosswise for two mowing heights, 5 and 8 mm, (3/16 and 5/16 inch). The mowing frequency was five times weekly. The vertical mower was adjusted for each treatment to remove the maximum amount of thatch possible without ripping out pieces of creeping bentgrass turf and was much more severe than the light frequent vertical mowing employed to brugh-up the turf prior to mowing. The treatment was designed to physically remove thatch. The coring treatments were applied with a Ryan Greensaire turf aerator. The Continued Next Page



Thatch Control, Cont.

tines were reduced in length so that only the minimum amount of soil necessary for the extraction of the core of thatch was removed during each coring operaion. The cores of thatch and soil were removed from the plots. Topdressing consisted of a Fox sandy loam soil with a gradation index D90/ D10 of 47.5 and mid-particle diameter size of 240 microns. It was applied at the rate of 0.1 m³ /100 m² (3 cu. ft./1000 ft²) thoroughly worked into the turf in four directions.

On 3 may 1978, after 10 treatment applications, the amount of thatch in plots receiving monthly vertical mowing or coring followed by topdressing, and topdressing alone was significantly less than that for the control and other thatch control treatments (Table 1). Increasing the vertical mowing frequency from monthly to weekly did not result in reduced thatch. Vertical mowing waseffective in reducing thatch content only when followed by topdressing. Vertical mowing alone did not provide a satisfactory playing surface. Results indicate that topdressing without vertical mowing or coring would be effective in controlling thatch. Monthly coring without topdressing provided better thatch control, was less destructive to the turf and provided a better putting surface than monthly vertical mowing without topdressing (Table 6).

Topdressing was found to be an effective thatch control treatment alone or in combination with vertical mowing and coring. Topdressing decreased thatch accumulation by improving the microenvironment for thatch decomposition. Topdressing improved turf quality by significantly reducing the severity of scalping injury at the 5-mm mowing height during the first 5 mo. of the study. By incorporating topdressing into the intact thatch, a firm smooth surface was provided for the mowing operation.

Coring was a more effective thatch control practice when combined with topdressing than when combined with topdressing than when used alone (Table 1). Coring in this study differed from the aerification (coring) treatment described by Murray and Juska



(1977), where a 5-cm core of thatch and soil was extracted and the soil worked into the turf after the cores had been broken up with a vertical mower. Since coring without topdressing promoted significantly less annual bluegrass than vertical mowing without topdressing (Table 4), the use of coring with shortened tines should be considered as a thatch control measure on areas that are not compacted, and the disruptive process of aerification by coring can be avoided.

The reduction in mowing height from 8 mm to 5 mm (5/16 to 3/16 inch) was very effective as a thatch control treatment (Table 2) and should be the first consideration when thatch begins to accumulate on putting greens.

The higher level of nitrogen did not increase thatch accumulation only when the soil microorganism activity is reduced by reduced soil aeration as occurs on compacted soils. However, while most studies such as this one indicate that under good soil aeration levels nitrogen does not increase thatch it should be remembered that unless the root zone mixture has a high content of sand and does not compact readily, putting green root zones are usually compacted to some extent and excessive nitrogen levels is one of the main causal factors of thatch accumulation.

Winter injury was more severe on plots where the creeping bentgrass was injured by thatch control treatments (Table 3). All treatments receiving topdressing had significantly less winter injury than the control plots; this was probably related to the reduced thatch

Table 1. Accumulated thatch (mm) on 3 May 1978 after four treatments during 1976 and six treatments during 1977.

	Vertical	mow		(
Control	Weekly	Monthly	Monthly plus top dressing	Monthly	Monthly plus top dressing	Top dressing
11.5 at	9.1 ab	9.4 ab	4.0 c	8.1 b	4.9 c	4.2 c

T Values are the mean of two mowing heights and two nitrogen levels replicated four times (16 observations). II-C Means followed by the same letter are not significantly different (Duncan's multiple range test, P = 0.05).

Table 3. Influence of thatch control treatments on winter injury.

	Vertical	mow			Core	
Control	Weekly	Monthly	Monthly plus top dressing	Monthly	Monthly plus top dressing	Top dressing
5.7 c†	3.8 d	4.9 c	7.5 b	7.2 b	9.7 a	7.9 b

Youal evaluation using a rating system of 1-10, with 1 representing dead hart and 10 green growing turt.
a-d Means followed by the same letter are not significantly different at the 5% level of probability.

Table 6. Turf uniformity t with thatch control treatments.

Thatch control treatments							
Control	Vertical mowing	Coring	Top- dressing				
9.0 a	6.2 c	7.4 b	9.6 a				

Visual evaluation 1-10, 10 best furf (April 1978) I-C Means followed by the same letter are not significantly different at the 5% level of probability level, the moderation of temperature extremes and reduced desiccation from the presence of topsoil around the crowns during the winter months.

Plots in which the creeping bentgrass was injured by thatch control treatments had more annual bluegrass than plots that were uninjured by treatment (Table 4). Topdressing monthly vertical-mowed plots increased the density of the creeping bentgrass and resulted in less annual bluegrass than on plots vertical-mowed monthly without topdressing. The suppression of annual bluegrass germination in the top-dressed vertical-mowed plots may have been the result of light exclusion by the topdressing as suggested by Madison (1971) but was more likely due to the strong competition provided by the tight Penncross turf developed by the topdressing treatment.

Most studies indicate that annual bluegrass is more invasive under high nitrogen levels and this was true in the study reported here (Table 5). Annual bluegass is an aggressive competitor to perennial turfgrasses through an extensive shoot and root system. On root zone mixes of reduced aeration (compaction, overwatering), heavy wear stress and close clipping, annual bluegrass will grow more aggressively under high nitrogen levels than Penncross creeping bentgrass.

Vertical mowing, as a mechanical thatch control treatment, was very disruptive to the playing surface while coring was less so (Table 6). Topdressing is an important part of the management program to provide a smooth uniform playing surface.

Table 2. Influence of mowing height on thatch accumulation

Table 5. Nitrogen and annual bluegrass invasion

	(mm).		-						
N	lowing he	eight (mm)	Nitrogen rate (kg/100 m ²)	Annual bluegrass (% of plot)					
5 (3	/16)	8 (5/16)	2 (4 lb)	8.1 b					
4.5	5 b	10.2 a	4 (8 lb)	25.4 a					

Enter are not significantly different at the 5% fevel of probability.

a-b Means followed by the same letter are not significantly different at the 5% level of probability.

Table 4. Influence of 21 thatch control treatments over a 3-yr. period on the ingress of annual bluegrass (

	1977	1978		
Treatment	31 Aug.	31 May	26 July	
Control	1.5 bc	1.9 b	2.6 b	
Vertical mow weekly	2.9 a	4.7 a	4.6 a	
Vertical mow monthly	2.7 a	3.9 a	4.1 a	
Vertical mow monthly plus top dressing	2.4 ab	1.7 b	2.5 b	
Core monthly	1.1 C	2.5 b	2.7 b	
Core monthly plus top dressing	1.3 c	2.5 b	2.6 b	
Top dressing	1.2 c	1.8 b	2.3 b	

Visual evaluation using a rating system of 0-10 with 10 representing 100% of the plot populated with annual bluegrass.

8-C Means within columns followed by the same letter are not significantly different at the 5% level of probability.

GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

LEFT- (L-R) Jim Timmerman, Bill Emerson, Don Hearn, Jim Lindblad, Richard Slivinski, Paul Boizelle, Robert Osterman Candidates - Running for offices in GCSAA.

RIGHT-(L-R) John Kirtland, Glenn Korhorn, Ken Debusscher, Bob Birdsall, enjoying the festivities after the Golf-Day Banquet.





LEFT-Hole-in-One for Dean Manos, Member Barton Hills C.C. Hole # 13 — During annual Fund Raising Tournament. Oakland Hills C.C.

Season s TOR Greetings and Best Wishes for the Coming Year



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NATIONAL GOLF FOUNDATION BULLETIN

Golf Play Up! Highest Ever Recorded

NORTH PALM BEACH, FL – The number of golf rounds played in the United States during the second quarter rose 8.5% over a year ago. This is the largest increase recorded since the National Golf Foundation began quarterly analyses in 1978.

The three major types of golf facilities measured by NGF-private, daily fee and municipal - all showed gains in rounds played. Private clubs led the way with an 11.1% increase, followed by te daily fee courses at 10.9% and the municipal facilities at 6.4%.

On a regional basis, the South Atlantic states showed the greatest growth (13.2%), followed by the East North Central (10%), Mountain (9.9%), Pacific (9.4%), South Central (7.7%)

and the Northeast (2.7%). Only the West North Central area showed a reduction in rounds played of 3%.

A New Menace, Cont.

opinions totally on the stimpmeter, a table and readings.

The following story may seem farfetched but is actually happened in Chicago a couple years ago. Their was a golfer, who happened to be a member of the Grounds of Green Committee of a neighboring country club, who got wind of the stimpmeter. He proceeded to purchase the device along with articles, charts, and tables. Instantly he felt he was an expert on judging quality putting turf. He began to experiment with his newly purchased toy at his golf course, recording readings of putting green speed. After he had had his fill of reading of his own greens, he decided to trespass on neighboring golf courses to compare stimpmeter readings. I heard the fellow had visitied my golf course, but I missed him! At a neighboring club he was confronted by the golf course superintendent and was Continued Page 14

> Jim Brocklehurst Technical Representative

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A New Menace, Cont.

lucky he did not get shot! He visited a club or two a day, some in the mornings, others at night. He made some readings after a heavy rain, other times under the driest conditions. He did not know if the green had been mowed that day or double cut. He did not know the turfgrass variety or the height of cut. He did not know anything except how to roll a ball down an aluminum bar. When he had finished his reading, he compiled his so-called expert data and proceeded to hassle the golf course superintendent at his home golf course. It took some time, but the golf course superintendent was finally able to put the stimpmeter packing trespasser in his place!

This is a good example of how the stimpmeter has put the golf course superintendent under the undue stress. As a professional turfgrass manager I know that one cannot expect the same from every putting green. Greens differ widely on a 18 hole golf course. Greens have different soil mixtures, different turfgrass varieties and different exposure to the elements. You should not be expected to produce the same stimpmeter reading under the varied conditions; one cannot do it and maintain quality turf.

Take the putting green bentgrass varieties, Washington, Toronto, Penn-Conggressional, Penneagle, cross, Evansville, Seaside or the old South German mixture. They all differ to a degree in their response to height of cut, ability to withstand wethot humid conditions and their response to height condtions and their reaction to stress. Many of the older golf courses do not have the same variety of turf on all greens; they have 3 of this 6 of that and 9 of the other. Add to this some greens with a USGA soil mix, others with a 1-1-1 mix and a few others with a clay base. You cannot standardize them and expect a club to shoot for a uniform stimpmeter reading on greens at all times.

It is a common practice in the Chicago area for golf course superintendents to strive to maintain uniform, smooth, true and GREEN putting surfaces. We alter our management practices to the *Continued Page 17*



Announcements

To: All Turf Managers and other Turf Personnel

The 53rd Annual Michigan Turfgrass Conference sponsored by Michigan State University and the Michigan Turfgrass Foundation will be held January 18-19, 1983 at Long's Convention Center in Lansing, Michigan. Sessions include MSU turfgrass research reports, golf course management, lawn care business topics, athletic field management, sod production, clipping removal from fairways and general lawn care topics.

Speakers include Dr. Joe Duich, Professor of Turf Management at Penn State University;Dr. Harry Niemczyk, Professor of Entomology and, also Dr. David Neilson, Professor of Plant Pathology both at the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center at Wooster, Ohio.

On Wednesday afternoon several "Basic School" sessions will be held on a first-come, first-served basis, including sessions on turf insect identification, shrub and tree pest indentification, grass identification and basic soils. Pesticide Applictors Certification and Recertification exams will also be offered.

If you have any questions about the conference program, please contact Paul Rieke (517/355-0266) or Shawn McBurney (517/353-9022).

THE 1983 PENNSYLVANIA TURFGRASS CONFERENCE & TRADE SHOW WILL BE HELD AT THE HERSHEY LODGE & CONVENTION CENTER, HERSHEY, PA FROM FEBRUARY 28 – MARCH 3, 1983.

"Season's Greetings and happiness always," from the Michigan and Border Cities Golf Course Superintendents Association.



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A New Menace, Cont.

turfgrass variety, soil and weather conditions. We may raise the height of cut during hot-humid weather to avoid scalping. We irrigate to maintain a uniform moisture level. We follow preventative fungicide programs and strive to maintain a healthy turf. Our fertility practices are based on just enough nutrients to provide continual recovery from player damage. We topdress, aerify, spike, vericut, comb and brush as needed, to asure the best possible putting surface. These practices to produce a desirable putting turf are not based on a set stimpmeter reading, but instead on our agronomic and greenskepping ability to provide our memberships a uniform, true, healthy and GREEN putting surface. 95 percent of the memberships at my club are not color blind; they can tell brown from green!

During this past summer I received a number of comments from members at my club concerning the television coverage of championship golf events. These people were wondering what was wrong with the greens on many of the golf courses that hosted USGA and PGA events. They noticed the brown turf. This condition stood out well on the television coverage of the USGA Women's Open which was held in the Chicago area. As I understand it, on the Monday of the tournament week, the golf course superintendent was told to maintain the greens according to the desired stimpmeter readings for tournament week, the golf course superitendent was told to maintain the greens according to the desired stimpmeter readings for tournament play. It made no difference that the area had received a heavy rainfall the night before - go ahead, let's get that desired stimpmeter reading, mow the greens, mow them again; we want the speed! the results - SCALP!

Neighboring golf course superintendents that day listened to their knowledge of putting green turf and not to some stimpmeter packing tournament official. Most golf course superintendents in the Chicago area that day elected to omit mowing their greens because of the wet soil condi-

Continued Next Page

A New Menace, Cont.

tions, and their greens stayed GREEN !! To me this was an excellent example of turfgrass abuse by the stimpmeter. Common sense. agronomic and greenskeeping knowledge were put aside in order to establish a set stimpmeter reading. True, not all greens were scalped that day by this action. Not all were the same; different grasses, different soils. The sad part is that the majority of the greens shown on television were the greens that were scalped the most. Was this fair to them to be forced to play on recovering green



for the rest of the golfing season? A golf course superintendent myself, I can imagine how he felt. Yet, the stimpmeter is billed as a useful tool.

So far I feel fortunate, as yet I have not personally been confronted with the stimpmeter, But, I see it as an instrument that is doing more harm to the golf course superintendent that good. This harm has come in the promotion of the stimpmeter, the placing of it into the hands of the sidewalk superintendent and the logic that the faster the putting surface the better, even if the turf will not tolerate it.

It seems unfair to me that an organization such as the USGA caters so closely to the low handicap golfer. Sure the touring pro and the under five handicap golfers claim they putt better on fast greens. But over 90 percent of the membership at 99 percent of the golf courses do not fit into this class. The majority of the golfers like a putt that they feel they can control; it makes the game more enjoyable for them. Most golfers also love the color green, brown makes them feel that something is wrong. Brown goes with trouble; the more brown the member of a golf club sees, the more trouble the superintendent is in. There is that old saving of golf course superintendents, "When the grass is green, you are a hero; when it is brown, you are a bum!" This old saying still holds true today in the eyes of the average country club member. The USGA has been beneficial for the golf course superintendent over the year. I have read the USGA Greens Section Record for over 18 years and still look forward to each issue. I have had problems, and the articles have helped me solve them. But this stimpmeter business is not in the best interest of the golf course superintendent, and it is not being received well. As it is, the golf course putting green is the most intensely cultivated crop in the world. No where do we find a plant continually put under such stress, and now we have the stimpmeter to stress our golfing turf further. I cannot help STIMPMETERS ARE but feel ANTI-GRASS.

One who speakes for the grass, Julius Albaugh, Golf Course Supt. Westmoreland Country Club



Season's Greetings

AND ALL GOOD WISHES FOR THE NEW YEAR



Bob, Burt, Don, Gordie, John Mac, John K., Dave, Roy, Jim, Ed, Ron & Paula



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