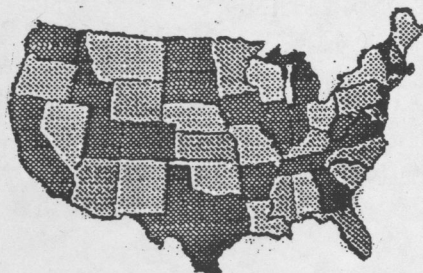


TurfComms



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PURPOSE: To pass on what we learn willingly and happily to others in the profession so as to improve turf conditions around the country.

FAST GREENS: An article in the January issue of Golfdom got me started on this issue. The issue in the article was that a movement toward faster and faster greens was destroying golf. Perhaps it is. Do we blame it all on the Stimpmeter? Some sure would.

One of my first experiences with the USGA Green Section was before the release of the Stimpmeter. I was visiting for a week in Southern New England and was told before I got to this one club that I was not to interfere or in any way challenge the concept the superintendent at this one country club had for great greens, even though it went against one of the prime concepts of USGA golf. What was this superintendent doing?

He maintained greens that would hold a worm burning 2 iron shot. The greens were soft, soggy, and looked as if they had acne. They didn't putt worth a damn; and you would leave your foot prints behind in them if you weighed over 150 pounds and had a size 8 shoe. This superintendent had convinced his members they had some of the best greens in the world. He was a little Irish bantam rooster-like guy who had been there 20 years or more. But most importantly, he was a salesman! He had even convinced the membership that he could keep salaries lower if the crew got a hot toddy break in the early afternoon. That's right. The crew all cuddled up to the bar in the clubhouse for an afternoon snort on the club each day.

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Now the point is: you the superintendent; have to control the speed of greens at your golf course. It is part of your job even if it isn't in the job description. Easy for me to say! The fact that I would have found it very difficult to do in a diplomatic way, is why I did not become a superintendent. A few months in such a position made me realize that was not where I belonged.

Now, in a sidebar, the article also points out that some superintendents at private clubs sometimes play a "dangerous game of chicken" to see who can have the fastest greens 'in town'. That was going on back in the early 80s in the Denver area, when I was with the Green Section. It will probably continue going on forever. Boys will be boys.

Also, in another sidebar, they point out that architects are having to take green speeds into the design of greens. They "can't design greens with contours" we are told. What the heck ever happened to architects's egos. They need to be salesman too and stand up to the golfers and tell them golf is really smooth contoured greens not smooth flat greens. Perry Maxwell, the golf course architect of Southern Hills and Prairie Dunes fame, was, to my way of thinking, the contoured green expert. You couldn't maintain an original Perry Maxwell putting green at a 10 foot Stimpmeter speed and have more than one or two pin placements. Those greens were so undulating they didn't have to be fast to be challenging.

CONVERSION OF RYEGRASS FAIRWAYS TO BLUEGRASS: impossible dream? This article is in the Green Section Record of Jan./Feb. 2004. It is by Dr. Koski, the Colorado State U. extension turf spec. and James Newberry, the irr. assist. At Vista Ridge G.C. in Lafayette, CO. The last paragraph of the article sums it up reasonably well.

"The results of this study, along with anecdotal field observations by agronomists and superintendents over the years, would suggest that the overseeding (via slit-seeding) of perennial ryegrass fairways with any amount of bluegrass is a futile practice. The results of another C.S.U. study, along with recent superintendent trials, would indicate that some level of success might be attained when overseeding is done in conjunction with core cultivation. The larger opening may provide some space in which the young bluegrass seedlings can mature and develop."

In the late 1970s I was visiting a South Dakota club that had been overseeding annual bluegrass fairways for years with Kentucky bluegrass. A thorough inspection of the results found no Ky. blue. I convinced them to try overseeding with the new perennial ryegrass cultivars. Four years later, they had converted the well drained fairways on the course to perennial ryegrass. The more poorly drained or wetter fairways persisted in annual bluegrass.

With all due respect to the new improved Kentucky bluegrass cultivars as seedlings they are not going to compete with either perennial ryegrass or annual bluegrass. I have seen enough seed mixes with only 5% perennial ryegrass by weight, produce 40% or more cover of perennial ryegrass the first season. And the cover of Kentucky blue often went down from that 60% level the next year. In only one case did I see the reverse. A cold

dry open winter turned such a stand to pure Kentucky blue on a new course in the area of the North and South Dakota shared border. Perennial ryegrass is not very safe in Dakota winters, outside of the greater Sioux Falls area.

If you want Kentucky bluegrass fairways and now have perennial ryegrass or annual bluegrass, I would suggest solid sodding to a blend of the new bluegrasses.

TREE CARE: The Root of the Matter, an article in the Jan. 2004 issue of Tree Care Industry. What to do about tree baskets is one of the questions covered in this article. I hate them myself if they are left on. Invariably if left on they stick up in the air enough to trip over or to be hit with a lawn mower. Also the trees roots may be girdled by the wire mesh as the tree grows.

According to the authors of this article the Northern Illinois Tree Specification Review Committee (NITSRC) recommends leaving on baskets if they are the low profile large mesh baskets. That still leaves a problem of landscapers moving the trees by lifting the trees with chains or nylon straps attached to the top of the baskets. This is a no, no. It stretches out the wire, breaks up the root ball and leaves wire above the soil surface. It is proper to move trees in wire baskets by picking up the basket from the bottom with a bucket or fork; or webbing of nylon straps under it.

Needless to say I have seen so many poorly planted trees on golf courses it has aroused my concern. However, the readers of this newsletter are almost all at golf courses where that is not a problem.

METHYL BROMIDE: Did you catch the article in the Feb. issue of GCSAA mag. On Renovating Putting Greens without Methyl Bromide. Apparently according to the research reported on pg. 127-131, Basamid (dazomet) treated turf covered with plastic did provide 100% control of annual bluegrass. Basamid is not overly effective on bermudagrass from stolons and rhizomes but, apparently, covering with plastic in addition to the recommended water seal, does give considerably more control of annual bluegrass from seed. Methyl bromide is scheduled to be off the market in 2005.

CADDIES: or the need for a caddy in the game of golf. I only once earned money as a caddy. But, now I see how perhaps my golf game would have been much better if I'd had a caddy when learning the game. Why?

I'm always looking up, often before I even hit the ball when playing the game. You say that is a normal enough fault with many golfers and has been much written about. But, has anybody blamed that fault on the lack of growing up without a caddy?

When I started golf with used clubs and used balls at the age for five I quickly learned that golf balls were easily lost and very expensive to replace for one as poor as I. Therefore, when learning how to play, I quickly learned to keep my eye on the ball and

that, of course, meant lifting my head immediately to follow it on its strange flight. How can you properly learn to keep your head down when your balls are at stake? Thus, I recently concluded, I would have developed into a much better golfer had I been given a caddy along with the free used clubs and a few old golf balls. Now, at 68, I blame the world for not supplying me with a caddy---perhaps I could have given Jack a run for his money. Yah, and I still believe in Santa Claus.

PIN HIGH - LARRY AYLWARD'S COL. Golfdom, Feb. 2004 Those Were the Days, My Friend. Larry makes a valid point for shorter 'rounds' of golf that are not 9 or 18. I'm not sure how you do this on your golf course but he has a point - read this! As a retired old man I'm very happy walking 9 holes and carrying my bag. I'll play 18 if somebody twists my arm but in that case I want a cart. Time is not a problem with me but it sure is for most of the world and 3 hours are needed to get in 9 holes, 5 for 18 and that doesn't include getting to the course and back. Those times do include a little warmup and preparation time. So if your golf course is struggling, maybe there is a way to get some more golfers on the course if you can set up a three hole practice site or ???

STRUCTURE.

Without maintenance, it starts to break down. It's the same with your soil structure. Perhaps you saw this Aquatrols ad for Caltrisal in the March 2004 issue of GCSAA's Golf Course Management magazine. That statement above sent me into the computer to type this comment: Caltrisal, I assume, is a liquid calcium source and whether it works or not, is not why I got excited. On greens our soil structure is known as single-grain and all the calcium in the world isn't going to prevent it from breaking down. Regardless of what you do it will stay single-grain.

Now in roughs and fairways where you have silt and clay present in fair amounts a little added calcium may help improve structure of acid soils. However, what results in the best soil structure is lots of organic matter and plenty of earthworms. Then keep the maintenance equipment off including the mowers. The best soil structure was is found under tall grassland prairies. In the face of golf traffic with constant mowing, I find it hard to believe added calcium is going to be much help with soil structure.

END

