TURFCOMMS

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 5 MAY 10, 1985

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

FROM THE FILES:

Bermudagrass encroachment into bentrass putting greens

It is hard enough to keep bentgrass alive in the South without having to fight one of the most aggressive turf species we have. Numerous things have been tried with mixed success. There is no easy solution to my knowledge.

Zoysia sod around the green as a collar or more usual just outside a bentgrass collar has been tried at many a golf course. Now as many of you know I'm a definite zoysia fan but, I will not recommend this approach. Unless, you will take the zoysia sod out, down the banks and around the bunkers. This then becomes an effective though initially expensive way to control bermuda encroachment. Now you will have the somewhat lesser problem of zoysia encroachment.

Both Meyer and Emerald have been tried for purpose. Meyer may be the better choice. If you must try zoysia use at least a three foot wide strip. You will will probably see some damage from turning of greens mowers on it where the zoysia does not have good drainage. Be sure the zoysia sod you use is free of bermudagrass and grown on a soil that is similar to your soil or sandier in nature.

Do not fertilize it more than once a year. Now tell me how you are going to make sure that when fertilizing greens you do not fertilize the surrounding zoysia? If you are extremely careful not to overfertilize the zoysia and are mowing it at 1/2 inch or less you will find the creeping bentgrass crowding out the zoysia.

TURFCOMMS is published at unpredictable intervals by the editor and publisher:

Douglas T. Hawes, Ph D
Certified Professional Agronomist
Specializing in Golf Course
Maintenance Consulting

2408 Roundrock Trail
Plano, Texas 75075
(214) 867-0176

Subscription cost is $10.

Beware of cutting repair plugs from the edge of any green where bermuda or zoysia is in the collars. I have seen too many cases of a plug of these grasses moved to the middle of a green this way. It is amazing how both of these grasses can spread at 3/16 to 1/4 inch height of cut. I can name two courses in Missouri with large patches of zoysia in their greens. Cut your repair plugs from a nursery. Every golf course should have a nursery and when you are far enough south to worry about bermudagrass encroachment a large one is desirable.

The use of an edger to cut a thin groove around the green is used by some. This must be done almost weekly during the long bermudagrass growing season in the South. Then you must follow the edger and hand pull up any stolons that this doesn't pull up. Some follow this up with periodic Tupersan(siduron) applications at about 3 times the recommended rate. Usually the club adopts a local rule to assist players who's ball ends up in this groove. A fair number of man hours are needed plus it must be given a definite high priority in the schedule of maintenance to work successfully. It is usually done every monday where done successfully.

Recently I have encountered some southern superintendents that have become firm believers in low nitrogen programs for bentgrass greens. They typically have a reduced problem with bermuda encroachment. Bermudagrass requires a fairly high level of nitrogen. These bentgrass greens are receiving all of their nitrogen between late September and mid-May and not much then. This means the bermudagrass has difficulty obtaining the nitrogen it needs.

Using cultivars of bermudagrass such as Tifgreen which is more sensitive to damage from Tupersan has been reported to be helpful. With these grasses around the greens an occassional heavy application of Tupersan in a narrow band is suppose to give good bermuda control. Timing of these applications will be helpful regardless of which bermudagrass cultivar you are trying to control. Both, late fall before dormancy and early spring at about 50% bermudagrass greenup seem to be effective times of application.

A large bentgrass nursery, a sod cutter and a good sod laying crew to replace invading bermudagrass and thus get the greens back to their original size also works. This is expensive. Improved success has been obtained by putting an application of Tupersan down underneath the bentgrass sod. One never seems to get all those rhizomes out. Beware, Cohansey has been reported as sensitive to damage from Tupersan.

I have also seen soil sterilization of the contaminated area used quite successfully. Methyl bromide was used by these two superintendents followed by reseeding to bentgrass with only heavy vertical mowing for seedbed preparation. It works well on golf courses closed mondays and with a low amount of fall play. A low amount of fall weekend play is very common down here in football country.

MORE FROM THE FILES - The grass is not always greener on the other side of the fence. But at times we all imagine it so. If you've a hankering for the short season of the northern region such as that arid area marked by parts of Idaho, Wyoming, Montana, and the western Dakotas beware. Desiccation in the winter is a very real winter nightmare. How do you water your greens when the wind chill is below -30 degrees? How do you recover fast enough in the spring to satisfy the golfer who has been cooped up all winter by that same -30 degree wind chill. Spring is here. The sun is out. It almost never rains. The golfers want to play NOW! But, the grass won't grow fast enough. The days may often be warm and sunny in the spring but the nights are usually too cold for much grass growth.

Much of that area also has poor water quality because "it almost never rains". I have enjoyed working with the superintendents in this area and have a real appreciation for their problems. At times I have felt almost helpless their water is of such poor quality. The drier it gets the poorer becomes their water quality. Combine low budgets, short growing season and poor water quality and one wonders how they keep going. It is no wonder that almost all the superintendents at these courses are very young. Here is a letter I wrote recently to one of them.

"I thought it would be best to clarify things by writing. As to your high pH problem - there really is little you can do for it in your situation.

Drainage should be the highest priority. This combined with some gypsum or sulfur and heavy rains can be very helpful. Obtaining low sodium irrigation water also would be helpful. Gypsum is most helpful when soil calcium levels are low. I don't remember how yours are. If low apply 25 to 50 pounds of gypsum per thousand square feet spring and fall. If calcium levels are high than sulfur at four pounds per thousand spring and fall may help.

Be sure to apply sulfur uniformly. For best results apply at 2 pounds per thousand a month apart. Granular sulfur products are safer than wettable powders or flowables. The rates above are safe under your conditions only. On the East Coast superintendents get in trouble with 4 one pound applications spread out over a year. As mentioned on the phone 10 pounds per thousand may well be safe in your situation. Only a long term test or two would determine that for sure.

Seed with Fults alkaligrass and Penncross for greens and tees. Replace Penncross with Ram I Kentucky bluegrass for fairways."

A STIMPMETER TALE? A Texas superintendent told me this tale as the gospel truth. He is at a "first class" club where the bentgrass greens seldom drop below a stimpmeter speed of 8 feet. A neighboring "superintendent" from a local public golf course

came over and inquired about the Stimpmeter.

The first superintendent demonstrated his stimpmeter and explained carefully how to use it and then loaned it to the second superintendent. The second superintendent brought it back a couple of days later and made the following comments: "I triple verticut those suckers, lowered the height of cut to one eighth inch and triple cut them so there ain't hardly any grass on them. Got the speed up from 3 to 5. Sometime, I wish you'd tell me how you all get them to 8 and 1/2."

It becomes a "tall tale" when you find out that the second superintendent meant by 3 and 5. 3 and 5 were the lenghts of the stimpmeter, or 9 and 15 feet. What makes it almost a believable story to me is that I had seen the greens at the second superintendent's golf course a few years back. I took a picture of them at that time because they had such an incredibly thin stand of bentgrass on them. The picture is on page one of the Nov/Dec, 1984, Record and there has the caption "the scale can tip both ways - some greens are too thin; some too fat". I do not know if the greens were that thin when the second superintendent speeded them up from "3 to 5" but, that is the only way I'll believe the story.

THE "SUBBING" EXPERIENCE (continued from issue 4)

Mr. Hawes finds that "subbing" for the most part differs considerably from his days as a traveling agronomist. The lenght of day and the pay are much shorter. The shorter day is a blessing and allows for development of the consulting business and other activities.

As mentioned in the last issue maintaining discipline is a prime responsibility. I find a flexible approach helps. When dealing with an "honors" class you can often just use a dance chaperon approach letting them know you respect them but expect them to obey school rules. A "fundamentals of" class you take the drill sergeant to recruits approach. "Jump" on one trouble maker as soon as the bell rings and don't let up on him(her) until you have him under control. Than go on to the next one and repeat the process. Once they see you mean business they settle down.

If you can learn names real quick it helps. Spot the trouble makers first as they come into class and concentrate on learning their names. It is easy to take over a class where the teacher insists the students sit only in assigned seats and leaves you a seating chart for each class. "John Rand please be quiet." works much better than "You in the brown sweater please be quiet."

Some of you are aware I taught at the junior college level for twelve years and are wondering about the comparison to that experience. There really isn't any but, that experience has made substitute teaching a lot easier for me. For the most part I have found subbing enjoyable.

END