

TURF COMMS



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

BYRON NELSON - Was lucky enough last month to hear this former great golfing champion of the 1930's and 40's talk at the North Texas Golf Course Superintendent Association's Award Banquet. Byron Nelson was the winner of 5 major championships and had 18 victories in one year on the tour. Eleven of those were won consecutively.

He told of his first caddy job at Glen Garden Country Club, Ft. Worth when it had sand greens. He also said he played in his first tournament on sand greens. You need to remember golf had only been played in Texas for 17 years when Byron Nelson was born.

He said he was born when the horse drawn wagon was the usual means of transportation. The changes in golf have almost been as great as the change in travel from wagon to moon rocket, he said. In 1935, he played in the North-South Championship at Pinehurst on sand greens but what he remembers with more dread are the old grainy common bermuda grass greens he played on through the South for much of his active Tour years.

This was back in the days when there weren't any verticuts and brushes were seldom mounted on the mowers. He tells of playing to greens so as to end up on the side of the cup where the grain would be running toward the hole. To him playing the grain was the most important part of putting on common bermudagrass "greens-of-old". He would rather go back to sand greens than those grainy common bermudagrass greens. On those "greens-of-old" he said the right bounce was often more important than the putting stroke. (Tifgreen '328' was released in 1956.)

He feels low scores now being made by golf professionals are more due to the super smooth putting surfaces that the superintendents are providing than the improvements in golf equipment. To

emphasis that point he tells about a missed putt at Phoenix Country Club during a PGA Tournament. He had left a 35 foot putt on the lip of the cup and walked up to it and took a back swing at it with the putter. The putter hit a clump of *Poa annua* and stopped just before striking the ball to add another stroke to his score.

He closed urging the superintendents to keep up the good work.
END

LANDSCAPE PLANNING - Are you preparing to "spruce-up" some areas around the golf course this coming spring? Here are some things to consider in your planning.

1. Think in terms of large masses and group plantings using three species. One-of-this and one-of-that usually looks terrible. If in doubt - don't put it in OR put more of it in.

2. The way you landscape the club entrance and clubhouse areas leaves the ONLY impression your non-playing members and some guests will have of your efforts. If you are looking for a move up some of those guests may be potential future employers and the non-playing members often can control your destiny.

3. Afraid of growing flowering plants? Don't be; it is alot easier than maintaining fine putting greens. Stick to well adapted plants at first. Remember what Madison says in "Practical Turfgrass Management", plants from all over the

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DOUGLAS T. HAWES, PH D
CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL AGRONOMIST
SPECIALIZING IN GOLF COURSE
MAINTENANCE CONSULTING

2408 ROUNDROCK TRAIL
PLANO, TEXAS 75075
(214) 867-0176

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LANDSCAPE PLANNING (cont.) world can grow vigorously in a garden where the hoe removes competition from weeds and other plants.

4. You will find annuals need to be regularly fertilized to look their best.

5. You also need to consider the amount of light the location receives. There are some very colorful foliage plants for those shady locations.

6. People want COLOR. If nothing else that will keep the women happy. A good friend and wise superintendent I know once told me that if he keeps the women happy, they will keep the men happy for him.

7. Do not forget to provide your flowering plants with an appropriate background. A dark green evergreen planting highlights the brilliant colors of the flowers you have gone to such trouble to plant. It is hard to beat the view from the tee of beautiful flowers back dropped with evergreens 125 yards or 325 yards down the fairway and to one side.

8. Attempt to achieve emphasis for your flower plantings by: their placement, their isolation from other attractions, or their contrast with the surroundings.

ANDROPOGON ISCHAEMUM L.

A Possible Grass for Those That Desire Naturalized Roughs

A. ischaemum, was one of many grasses used by Pete Dye when seeding the roughs at the new Country Club of Austin (Texas). This warm-season, semiprostrate bunchgrass from Asia is beginning to provide the type of open turf desired by those seeking naturalized roughs at this club. Most of the leaves are prostrate and the flowering stems do not produce a dense stand. Therefore, finding a golf ball in it is relatively easy.

Yet, the turf formed by this species is not the open easy play from surface that buffalograss so often provides. Buffalograss for most of the prairie states provides a good drought resistant turf cover for roughs. Yet it does not provide a very ROUGH rough. Buffalograss roughs are so easy to play from that good and bad players alike make little effort to avoid a rough composed of this species.

The flowering stems on A. ischaemum however are 15 to 25 inches tall so your swing may be somewhat hampered in it. Which also may make it necessary for the superintendent to have an occasional summer mowing done in roughs where this grass is present.

A. ischaemum goes under several common names and one other scientific name. It is best known in Texas as King Ranch blue-stem which is a cultivar from that famous ranch. Turkestan blue-stem and yellow bluestem are two other common names. It was one time called Bothriochloa ischaemem Keng. in the scientific literature.

Seeding at a rate of 1 pound per acre will provide 5.5 seed per square foot. A heavier rate will help reduce erosion by giving a quicker cover. This grass is adapted to heavy (silt and clay) soils, shallow soil sites and calcareous soils. It is used for pasture from south Texas to southwestern Oklahoma and can be seen on roadsides thru the Hill Country of Texas. It apparently does well without irrigation where rainfall is 15 to 20 inches per year.

There are three released cultivars. King Ranch - mentioned above which does well as far north as central Oklahoma. Plains - which is an Oklahoma selection more resistant to foliar diseases than King Ranch. El Kan - is a winter-hardy cultivar selected in Kansas and found to be winter hardy there and in SE Colorado.

My suggestion is that if this grass appears to have some of the characteristics you are seeking and you are in the states mentioned then try some. Seed a small amount in one or two sunny rough areas and see how it does. It is not suppose to be weedy yet it is reasonably aggressive in pasture situations. I will be keeping an eye out for it in my travels next year. If you have some information on it please let me know. Also let me know if you do give it a try.

HOWARD AND HUMMEL DID MANY A MUNICIPALITY A FAVOR

The above title could just as well read many a municipality did themselves a favor by hiring either Howard or Hummel. The Howard and Hummel referred to here are Leon Howard and Frank Hummel golf course architects of the "mid-continent" area.

Leon Howard has a B.S. and an M.S. from Texas A & M. The M.S. was obtained under Dr. Marvin Ferguson. The thesis title was "Compaction Problems in Putting Green Soils" and was part of the effort put in to arriving at the USGA specifications for putting green construction.

Most of the courses designed by Howard were done in Texas. However, he has at least one course in each of the following states: Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Tennessee. Half of his designs were for municipal golf courses (incl. military and daily fee) and the rest country clubs. I have been on a fair number of both types and he has typically given them decent size greens

with good surface and subsurface drainage. For the money that was paid out for these courses a good value was received.

Only one stands out in my mind as being a bad course. That one was so bad maintenance wise I never really gave any consideration to design. Very poor water quality combined with an equally low budget had created a semi-catastrophe. The greens were the best part of the course thanks to good drainage.

Frank Hummel is from Colorado. Last year I found myself on three of his muni's in one week. The first I had never been to but, felt sure it was one of his creations before I had reached the maintenance building. His greens are large and usually raised up well above the surrounding flat land. They often have some mounding build into the high banks. His greens also have fair to good surface and internal drainage. They are usually very adequate in size. There is sometimes a problem with wet spots in the approach and dry spots on the back banks. But, again the municipalities appeared to have received good value for the money they invested.

Mr. Hummel is an engineer by training and for a while a club golf professional after having played successfully in the Colorado region as an amateur. His golf course designs are found in neighboring states to the east and north plus Montana. The ones I have been on have very good irrigation systems for muni golf courses. Hummel has also done an equal number of country clubs. One of his courses stands out in my mind as a great municipal golf course.

That is Buffalo Dunes just south of Garden City across the street from a country club also well worth the trip - Southwind. The latter was designed by Donald Sechrest. Both architects made good to excellent use of the sand dune land they were given.

The above "endorsement" for these two was totally unsolicited. The article was stimulated by a conversation with another golf course architect who was in agreement with me. I have meet Hummel and walked one of his creations with him. Mr. Howard's master's thesis I have read and I have walked a fair number of his courses but have yet to meet the man. Both men are in their late fifties and still active designing golf courses but not to the extent they were in the 70's.

EDITORIAL COMMENT

I wish to thank you for the very positive response received so far toward Turfcomms subscription renewal and to another year of turf advisory visits. "The best buy in golf publications today" note attached to a check was much appreciated. Also much appreciated was the help received in writing some articles on winter play for an issue to come out in the Fall. END