

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.

EXCLUSIVE GOLF CLUB FOR NON-MEMBERS ONLY

Did you read that title twice? No? Please do so, I'll wait.

The title is actually taken from an advertisement for an about to open daily fee golf course here in the Greater Dallas area. It is not the first, but it is a pleasant addition to the Dallas golfing scene. Many of you played Industrial Hills in California during a GCSAA Convention at Anaheim quite some years back. That was one such facility. A difficult and challenging golf course very well maintained. Open to the public yet, charging a green fee well above the average municipal golf course. I had the good fortune to spend 10 days there. They had a constant steady and adequate flow of customers during that period. not jam packed, but sufficient people to generate good revenue at the fees charged. Thus they had dollars to spend on providing quality maintenance.

Alvamar in Lawrence, KS, or St. Andrews of British Open fame are a type of golf course seen too seldom in the U.S. from my point of view. That is first class design and first class maintenance at a club open to the daily fee golfer. I have mentioned others here in this newsletter: Buffalo Dunes in Garden City, KS, Indian Creek in Carrollton, TX and the Bear Creek Golf Course at the D/FW Airport.

There are others I'm sure scattered around the country such as The Captain's Club which I visited this summer. Some have the first class maintenance and others have the design, seldom do you see both. Along with both usually goes a much more expensive fee

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. Send checks to Doug Hawes at the above address.

for play. In major cities there appears to be enough golfers willing to pay the added price to make it work.

That price at the club from which the title was stolen is \$25 weekdays and \$35 weekends with price breaks at 2 P.M., 4 P.M. and 6 P.M. Prices are similar at Bear Creek. The Captain's Club was packed this summer at \$20 per round. The flip side of the non-member golf coin is give-away-golf or buy votes golf.

GIVE-AWAY-GOLF

You do not find this type of fee structure where the golf course has to pay it's way or make a profit. But, at many municipal and military golf courses the philosophy is different. Those making the decision as to what the fee structure should be, give more weight to the frequent and often vocal golfer. Thus he obtains by being the "squeaking wheel" a round of golf at below cost. Some seniors and retired military can by taking advantage of season tickets play for as little as fifty cents per round.

You can not maintain a golf course in decent condition for \$.50/round. Can you? Over the years too many golf course superintendents have been forced into impossible situations by such fee structures. The very high play generated by low fees makes maintenance difficult on three counts: golfer interference, excessive traffic damage, and a small amount of available funds.

Why do administrators make decisions in favor of give-away-golf? As mentioned above in at least some of the cases it has been to keep quiet and/or buy the vote of that vocal senior golfer. At military golf courses it is more a matter keeping active duty personnel in the military by supplying benefits not available on the outside. When handling the retired military I feel it is vote buying again.

I'm not sure that writing this will reduce the problems for many superintendents that Give-away-golf creates. However, an indictment of the practice needs has been long needed. It should be remembered that golf courses occupy a large piece of real estate. In the case of public and military golf courses that piece of land is not paying any taxes into the local government coffers. Therefore, the least it could do is pay it's own way. In some communities it has had to after the voters became angry over the need for "one more" tax increase.

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FROM MY CLIPPING SERVICE: An article on playing night golf in New Hampshire. The report is about playing using a special \$5.00 golf ball of clear, hard plastic with a \$1.00 lightstick made of Cyalume. The lightstick goes into the golf ball and gives you a ball that glows for about 5 hours.

Two problems were reported: mosquitoes and the light of a full moon. The light of a full moon is bright enough so that you have difficulty seeing the glowing golf balls.

The course superintendent, A. J. Chadwick, is quoted as saying he plays better during the day, "but I have a lot more fun playing at night." Elsewhere in the article the flying golf balls are described as looking like tracer bullets

Sounds like a good thing for a fun tournament. Let's hope it doesn't catch on too well. I hate to think what 200 golfers per night could do to the turf on a golf course stumbling around in the dark. How about damage to golf carts, etc. driving around at night?

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NEWS FLASH

KARL OLSON leaves USGA Green Section to become Superintendent of the National Golf Links of America.

Wonder who will be the next USGA Championship Agronomist?

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WINTER PROTECTION OF GREENS FROM DESICCATION

A lot of turf in creeping bentgrass putting greens has been lost from winter desiccation in the northern U.S. There are numerous steps that can be taken to stop that loss. The new spunbonded fabrics appear to be one of the best. But there are other less expensive alternatives that should be considered. Because getting off to a good start in the spring is so important in that area some investment needs to be made in winter protection.

For better winter survival you need to be sure and apply adequate amounts of potassium and iron to the putting greens in the early fall. Where desiccation is a perennial problem raise the height of cut to 1/4 inch sometime in late September and topdress.

To provide adequate potassium apply 4 pounds of potassium sulfate per thousand square before September is over and water in. It should be applied again a month before the ground freezes for the winter.

Iron sulfate should be applied at 2 ounces per thousand every other week for 3 applications before the ground freezes for

the winter. 2 ounces of sulfuric acid per 100 gallons of water is helpful in getting this material to dissolve in the spray tank where high pH water is a problem.

After the ground freezes and play ceases, a preventative snow mold fungicide application should be made. Then the greens should be heavily topdressed. Up to 1/4 inch of sand may be applied at this time with out damaging the grass. You may need to remove some of this in the early spring. If you do not use covers much of it will blow away. If you have a cover ready to place on the green I suggest you still topdress with sand but apply an 1/8 inch rather than a 1/4.

You need to consider winter watering and covering the greens with some protective material. Many golf courses in the north central states have a water wagon or borrow a fire tanker for applying water to the greens in the winter months. A quarter inch of water can make a tremendous difference to the grass at that time of year. That amounts to 156 gallons per thousand square feet. To be on the safe side try for 200 gallons per thousand. In your driest open winters try to put this on in December, January and February. It is assumed that the greens will receive a good soaking just before you shut down and blow out the irrigation system.

WINTER COVERS

Putting a cover on the greens in addition to the sand mentioned above has been done by many superintendents using many different materials. The cover should prevent most moisture loss while allowing rainfall to penetrate. The cover should allow 20 or more % of the available light to penetrate. A larger percentage is probable desired in regions where the sky is constantly overcast.

Covers have a few serious disadvantages. They tend to promote snow mold attacks because they do keep the greens moist and shaded. Thus creating ideal conditions for the fungi to develop. Snowmold under covers is usually a problem on those winters when you have above average amounts of snow which stay in place for 30 days or more. Late fall nitrogen applications will encourage snow mold development.

Covers take time to put in place and pin down as well as to remove. Covers may be expensive and do not allow play while down. Usually the grass underneath the cover is quite tender and needs a length of relatively mild weather to harden off after the cover is removed. The more the cover protects the grass the tender it will be come spring. What often happens is that the cover is removed exposing a lush green grass to harsh early spring conditions. (to be continued in issue 9)

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