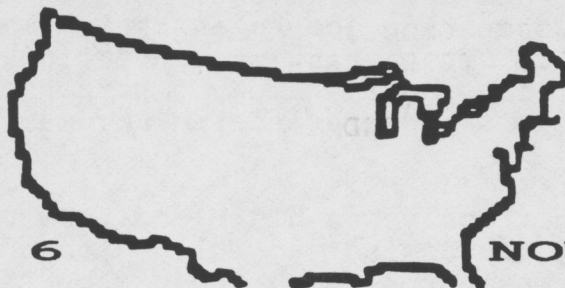


TURFCOMMS



V. 6, I. 6

NOV. 18, '91

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

TURF RESEARCH BECOMING BIG BUSINESS ? There is a new factor we need to consider when listening to turf researchers at the state university tell us about the new cultivar they have developed. Turn to page 87 of the November issue of Golf Course Management you will see where "Reed Funk and Rutgers University recently received more than \$131,000 in royalty payments from Jacklin Seed Co. for the 1990 crop year."

Maybe this helps explain why a prominent turf researcher lost his cool the other day. I was explaining why I had suggested an old and well proven cultivar for a new golf course rather than one of his new cultivars. During the conversation I said something to the effect that research plots don't mean anything, I want to see it working on the golf course before I recommend it. That's when he lost it.

Well first let me say that although I said it that bluntly I didn't really mean it that bluntly. I think research is absolutely essential and extremely helpful. Why else do I go to all those turfgrass field days, conferences and WRCC-11 meetings.

But, I tend to take any one researcher's results with a grain of salt. If it proves what I already know or suspect - fine. If it produces a new concept or product or technique - fine. But, I'm slow to get on the band wagon.

Well this researcher asked, how are our new cultivars going to get a chance if no one tries them. And then went on to say that

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

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he was sticking his reputation and his university's reputation on the line by releasing his new cultivars. And said all you have to do is go from one consulting job to another - implying that I made recommendations with out putting my reputation on the line. He went on to say, I'm going to name you personally and quote the above line at the GCSAA Conference as an example of what is holding back progress.

Well, at that time not only was his blood pressure at 200 and climbing but mine was beginning to climb to and I saw there appeared to be little reason to argue with him but he went on. I grow these new selections under more traffic than you see on a golf course with 50,000 rounds, I don't put on any preemerges or fungicides unless I absolutely have to, I don't syringe. Implying that only the toughest grasses could possible survive. He is probably correct - under his set of conditions the toughest grass survived.

Now I ask, what is going to happen when that new cultivar is made available to superintendents; many of which in the area in question routinely syringe, and treat their grass with preventative applications of preemerge and fungicides? Will it respond favorably? Let's hope so but who knows at this point?

As to getting a chance for his new cultivars or anybody else's; I see no shortage of volunteers who will try that new cultivar, technique or product. I'm old enough to have seen many new cultivars (Penneagle and Pennlu creeping bentgrass, and Midwest zoysia to name a few), techniques (vibraplow and shattercore) and a slew of products which come with much fanfare and go out - oh so quietly. Sometimes go quietly - followed by the superintendent that tried them with too much enthusiasm and somebody else's money

I'm constantly recommending my clients try new cultivars, products and techniques, but I recommend with caution and I urge the client to try it on test areas first.

Although all that the above researcher said about his need to protect his reputation and his university's, is probably true I think we need to start remembering that the universities are now beginning to obtaining a fair amount of their research money selling the very turf cultivars they are telling you that you should be using. More is involved when developing a new cultivar than pride in developing an improvement for the industry.

Let me end by saying this editorial is certainly not meant to criticize Dr. Funk and his research but just to put a little caution in the wind. I use the money that his research is bringing in to Rutgers only as an example. If you ask questions I think you'll find the USGA is planning to get a return on some of these new cultivars also. Admittedly both the universities and the USGA will plow the money back into research. But, when they stand to profit from your buying the product how do they differ from the seed companies?

AFRICAN BERMUDAGRASSES - WOW! Saw plots of these at the Oklahoma Turfgrass Field Day. They looked super. I had to get down and feel them they looked so much like the bentgrass they were next to. Made 328 (Tifgreen) mowed at the same height look like a dog.

African bermudagrass, Cynodon transvaalensis is not new to the fine turf world. Uganda, a selection increased by Dr. Fred Grau and sent out to many places across the U.S. in the 50's, was one cultivar. Using Beard's Turfgrass Bibliography the first mention of this grass is 1954. Dr. M. Zaki Mahdi an Egyptian who obtained his M.S. and Ph.D. at U.C.L.A. is given credit for getting this selection to the U.S. It has plant introduction number 183557. He first observed it in Cairo, Egypt. It apparently survived five winters at Beltsville, MD in the years prior to July 1954.

Mahdi, 1955, wrote in Golfdom that Ugandagrass "requires hard brushing and frequent topdressing to prevent undesirable graininess."

In the July, 1958 edition of Southern California Turfgrass Culture, Dr. Victor Youngner writes that the African bermudagrass cultivars have "been grown in the United States for a number of years but because of certain management difficulties have never become popular.....The great density of the turf and the relatively short blade length combine to create a problem of scalping which exposes an underlying brown mat. This mat builds up with great rapidity unless mowing is frequent and close." He makes it sound like something we could live with in this day and age of brushes, groomers and topdress applicators but, Madison supports his contention when writing his book.

Dr. John Madison in Practical Turfgrass Management, 1971, writes "I spent much time and money at Davis learning the management requirements of this grass for fine turf."

"As it tends to appear nitrogen starved, I gave it increasing amounts of nitrogen up to one-half pound of nitrogen per week per 1000 ft.². At all rates it appeared yellowish within a few days of applying nitrogen and the principal difference between rates was the amount of thatch built up. At high rates of nitrogen, thatch was measured in inches per season." He mentions seed head production as another problem. He goes on to say that he could not recommend it but thought that additional breeding might clean up his objections.

Well I'm not sure that breeding has cleaned up all of Madison's objections but the selections I saw at Oklahoma sure make you wish they were gone.

The literature indicates that this species is not as tough as *C. dactylon* but recovers rapidly. Like other bermudagrasses it is not shade tolerant. There are apparent three or four bermudagrass species of which *Cynodon dactylon* dominates our turf

world. But, many of the Tif-cultivars are the results of crosses of *C. dactylon* with *C. transvaalensis*. Duble in his 1989 book, Southern Turfgrasses: Their Management and Use, claims the following cultivars are the results of such crosses: Bayshore (Gene Tift), Sunturf, Tiffine, Tifgreen, Tifdwarf, Tifway and Santa Ana.

Dr. C. M. Taliaferro, a grass breeder at Oklahoma State University, has a collection of cold resistant cultivars that look promising for that southern bentgrass or northern bermudagrass green region. Dr. Taliaferro wrote an article on his work in TURFSOUTH, Nov. 1991. Dr. Glenn Burton in Georgia continues do breeding and selecting work with crosses of *C. dactylon* with *C. transvaalensis*.

Much more management work will probably need to be done after any *C. transvaalensis* selection gets released. That I'm sure will be mostly left up to the individual superintendents.

RACE TRACKS: Got to talk to the manager of the turf track at a horse racing facility in Oklahoma. He is using a 80:20 sand:rice hull compost mix with U-3 bermudagrass overseeded to perennial ryegrass in the fall for the turf.

He said that their only complaint so far is when the turf gets thin the jockeys are not very happy with the sand that flies up into their faces when they're riding anything but the winner. Good reason to make sure the horse your riding is out front!

TALL FESCUE EVALUATION AT OK STATE U.: Tribute, Trailblazer, Eldorado, Rebel, Fatima, Richmond, Falcon, Pick TF9, Normarc 77, Shortstop, Apache and Hubbard 87 all had acceptable summer quality this year. With Trailblazer and Fatima of these among those having excellent spring density.

LOOKS LIKE A PARKING METER: Yes, the Light Energized Irrigation Technology (LEIT) irrigation controller looks like a parking meter. And like a parking meter does not require any electric power lines to run it, just money and sunlight. It is worth considering for that out of the way spot you don't want to run a power line to. The computer inside is powerful enough to run almost any kind of irrigation program you would like to operate with. You will also need Micropower Solenoid Actuators to operate the valves you have.

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