

“Seedin in the Rain”

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Prior to September 1987 the fairways at Inverness Golf Club were a hodge podge of Bents, Poa Annua, Common Blues, Fescues, and Ryes. As of this writing, Bentgrass and Poa Annua dominate. Some have more Poa than Bent, and a few even has a greater population of the desired Penncross/Seaside blend. What took place between mid August and now could unfortunately be described as nothing short of common for the Chicago area: floods, seeding, more floods, more seeding, lower than normal temperatures, a dry spell, and a couple of early hard frosts to finish things off.

Although Superintendent Mike Bavier planned to regrass over a year ago, it was impossible to foresee the four and half inches of rain that came within thirty-six hours after seeding. To further complicate matters, air temperatures averaged in the low fifties. If we would have been asked what the worst possible post seeding weather forecast would be — that would be it. Although we received 16 3/4 inches of rain in August, we were still able to complete the project. Seeding began on Saturday morning, August 22nd and continued through the twenty fourth. The crew worked sunup to sundown and beyond, so we finished ahead of schedule fortunately, as the skies opened up on Tuesday, the twenty-fifth. (I should note that on the third day I let Mike take care of things while I attended the MAGCS meeting at Turnberry Country Club. I figured he could handle it by himself).

As for the first seeding process, we didn't do anything radically different than anyone else in the area. The fairway parameters were completely recontoured. We tried to use the rolling terrain to its fullest extent while only reducing total fairway space by two or three acres.

The Roundup application was set to begin on Monday, August 17th, but on that morning high winds forced us to re-think our game plan. Finally, after great consideration, we began at 5:00 P.M. By laying down four large tarps in the path of the three hundred gallon boom sprayer, we avoided dead spots in the rough while transporting from fairway to fairway. Headlights on the tractors and cushmans came in handy as we rolled off the last fairway at 9:30 P.M. Dew was already beginning to set in and we were worried the last two fairways might not kill. The next day we weren't thinking about the dew posing a problem because we were preoccupied with the hard rain that started coming down early in the morning. When we didn't see results for a while we were worried. Several days later, as strange as it sounds, we were relieved to see our fairways die! Nice shade of brown and a beautiful playing surface for a few days.

Typical member comment at this point: “Do you think the course will be in shape by 1990”.

Almost five acres had to be reseeded, including the third fairway which was under water for three days. We used our Sandpor to remove the layer of scum that collected, and then broadcasted and groove seeded another pound per thousand. The second seeding germinated with excellent results and to our amazement the Bent we originally put down, which sat under all that water, came up after about two weeks.

As far as the membership was concerned it was a roller coaster ride from day one. When the idea was presented, everyone was all for it. As the start date neared and the fairways were in ex-

cellent shape, they were asking why we wanted to kill them and start over. This was understandable so it became necessary to re-iterate our goals. Things were fine until we started aerifying in figure eight patterns. They didn't realize the extent of cultivation required. To say they were concerned would be an understatement — They thought we were crazy!

Typical member comment at this point: “I'm not going to play this goat ranch”. According to plan, we asked the players to stay off the course for three days after spraying, however, it was necessary to hold back play due to heavy rains for several days after the seed was down. They were asked to keep carts off the new fairways for the duration of the season, and just to make sure, we bought enough rope and stakes to outline all fifteen of them. We wanted to wait until it was absolutely necessary, however, practically no one drove on the fairways, so we decided to forgo the idea (is anyone looking for 30,000 feet of yellow rope)?

When the grass finally started coming in, it appeared from a distance we established a beautiful Bentgrass monostand. Typical member comment at this point: “I'll be bringing out some guests tomorrow to show off our new fairways”. Upon closer examination, we discovered a lot of Poa Annua, especially in the low spots. When the cool weather and frosts hit in October, the Poa stuck out like a sore thumb. We experimented with “Prograss” and are going to use other “Anti-Poa” chemicals.

Hopefully the Bent will be more aggressive next season. Lightweight mowers and clipping removal should definitely help. Although we have some Poa Annua, our goal was accomplished — we replaced the spotty, grossly segregated fairways with a more consistent stand, and like so many other courses we have joined the renewed fight against the dreaded annual bluegrass.

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