

Six superintendents' 1996 plans for growth regulators and overseeding

BY JOEL D. JACKSON, CGCS

I know! I know! You're finally getting over the effects of the Winter of '96 and here I am talking about overseeding already! But, the Fall Issue comes out too late and history tells me that seed orders are placed by late summer. So, if there are any tips or ideas that might influence your planing for next year then I'd better run them now. Instead of questionnaires this time, I interviewed six superintendents at the Poa Annua Classic representing the state from Duval to Palm Beach Counties.

Alan Puckett, Lake Region Y & CC, Winter Haven



JJ: Alan, in 1991 when Lake Region was on the cover of The Florida Green, you were using a rye/Poa triv blend on your greens. Is that still the case?

AP: No, for the past three years, we have been using a blend of 2 pounds per thousand square feet of Pennway bentgrass and 10 pounds per thousand square feet Sabre Poa trivialis. The bermuda was a little thin going into the fall from all the rain so we ended up using an extra pound of bent and an extra two pounds of Sabre.

JJ: Did the old adage, "thin going in, thin coming out" prove true this spring?

AP: Oddly enough we had less thin areas than I thought we would. I figured we might need 3 pallets of dwarf and we only used one. Normally, we are on a stringent liquid fertilizer program all winter. When we had those weird warm spells this winter amongst all the cold periods, I applied IBDU and Milorganite which I

think helped us fill in with some background bermuda. We are definitely farther ahead than I thought we'd be.

JJ: How did you apply your seed with this new blend?

AP: I measured out the correct amount of bentgrass required for each green and mixed it with a bag of Milorganite. We then adjusted the cyclone spreaders to put it out in two directions over the green. We did the same with the Sabre but we went approximately 5 directions to put down the seed. After each application we lightly top dressed with a Terra Topper and watered it in.

JJ: How did you grow in the greens?

AP: We waited a day or two and then mowed late in the day without baskets and dragged them with a small piece of carpet to settle any seed on top. One to two weeks prior to seeding we raised the height of cut to 3/16" and stayed there for three to four weeks after seeding. Then we gradually lower the height down to 5/32". Our green speed goal is 8.5-9.0 when the grass is mature.

JJ: How did you manage the overseeding during peak season?

AP: Well, besides the extra granular fertilizers that I mentioned earlier, we used our normal rotation of alternating complete and minor liquid fertilizer applications. We would spike every two weeks conditions permitting and by late February early March, I would aerify with 1/4" solid tines for compaction especially in the collars.

JJ: What do you do to manage transition time?

AP: First I watch chronic hot spots when it starts to warm up, hand watering as needed. Then I start applying 17-1-10 at .75 pounds of nitrogen per thousand every two weeks. Depending on the weather we start sooner and go more often.

JJ: Any other comments about this season's overseeding.

AP: Well, during some of the colder spells the grass got beat down pretty good. As more dormant bermuda was exposed the off color turf was more noticeable and generated some comments from the members.

JJ: Another topic we want to cover is growth regulators. Where do you use them?

AP: Well, when a new product comes out, I like to wait and see how it works before jumping in. Last year we used Primo on our range and on our wetter fairways (12 oz per acre). Based on Steve Ciardullo's results at Mountain Lake, I may try 2-3 ozs per acre on my greens every two weeks. We will be using it more this year on our trap fingers and lake banks and on the fairways that have some common bermuda in them (16 oz per acre).

John Gallagher, Boca Woods, Boca Raton.



JJ: Tell me about your season, John.

JG: I used 10 pounds per thousand of straight Sabre Poa trivialis this year. We had a great germination. I didn't even have to use

the extra seed I had in reserve to dust thin spots. We got them down to 1/8" this season. The members were real happy.

JJ: That's great! Tell us about the actual preparation and application process you used.

JG: Pretty simple actually. We just raised the HOC (height of cut) to 3/16"

prior to seeding. The next day we made two passes (different directions) with drop spreaders in the dew. After about six to seven days we started hand mowing at 1/4". Our collars did take a beating in this colder than normal winter, so we may overseed collars, tees and fairways next year! I applied Surflan pre-emergent to the collars this year. I will be trying something else, perhaps Barricade next year.

JJ: What did you do to manage the turf during peak season?

JG: Once the seedlings reach the three or four leaf stage we starting bumping the HOC down 1/32 of an inch through mid-January until we got to 1/8". This winter we had two Salsco rollers which made our greens a hit this year. They really helped us achieve the desired speeds more easily. Our fertilizer program is all foliar. Usually

20-20-20 at a 1/4 to 1/2 pound per thousand rate alternating with a minors blend.

JJ: How was transition in Boca Raton?

JG: Well, we had some serious transition this year. Yes, we had some thin areas. We try to explain in our club newsletter the effects of the alternating warm and cold weather this winter and how we have two

grasses competing and growing at the same time in the same place.

JJ: Tell me about your experience with growth regulators?

JG: I think it (Primo) is a valuable tool. Last year we targeted our fairways (8 oz per acre). We had over 80% suppression of the common bermuda seedheads. It was incredible. We got the best compliments on the fairways I've heard in my eight years here. We might try the greens this year.

Bill Plante, Orange Park CC, Orange Park.

JJ: Bill, with your weather up in Duval County, you fellows really depend on the success of your seeding programs. What do you use?

BP: For the past three years I have been very pleased with a blend of ten



pounds of Laser Poa trivialis and one pound of Southshore bent. We put it all out in one application.

JJ: Did this winter make you think about changing your blend?

BP: Not really! It was a tough winter no matter what seed you used!

JJ: What do you do to get your greens ready to seed?

BP: I like to have a few days growth on the greens when we seed so the seed will nestle down and stay put for dragging. Prior to seeding: we verticut two ways; raise the HOC to 1/4" and then stop mowing for a couple of days before seeding. We lightly top dress two ways with a Vicon spreader.

We go two ways with a cyclone spreader for the Laser and one way with a drop spreader for the bentgrass. Then in the afternoon we come back and make three more passes with the Vicon and drag it all in with a carpet drag.

JJ: When do you start mowing?

BP: We let the seed bed sit for eight to nine days or until I feel we won't pick up any seed. Then we start mowing at 1/4".

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JJ: What are your management practices once the overseed matures?

BP: We don't do too much to them from January through April other than an occasional rolling. In March, if they start to get hairy, we might do some light verticutting. We use liquid fertilizers like 20-20-20 and a minors blend with iron about once per month, primarily and may put out one to two granular applications of 13-2-13 at 1/2 pound of nitrogen.

JJ: How about your transition?

BP: Well, we aerified April 29th and 30th hoping to start thinning the overseed, but this spring has been so cool it only seemed to stimulate it. Normally, we increase our fertilizer amounts and the frequency of verticutting to help ease out the overseed.

JJ: Bill, have you used growth regula-

tors?

BP: Not that much. I used to think we couldn't afford to use it, but now I think we can't afford NOT to use it. We are resodding our bunker faces and adding a lot more flymo area. I'm going to try Primo there to help save some labor costs. I will also be trying it on my fairways and maybe even experiment on the greens.

Those three superintendents gave us glimpses into programs from North, Central and South Florida. Here are the highlights from the next three interviews:

**Peter Brooks,
The
Everglades
Club, Palm
Beach.**

JJ: Most superintendents I've been talking to have Tif dwarf greens. Peter, you have Tifgreen 328



greens how do you prep them for overseeding?

PB: We start cutting back on the nitrogen in September. Just prior to seeding we verticut fairly severely four times. We go up and back the same pass in two different directions. Then we scalp them down. Quadra tine aerify, topdress, drag and then apply the seed. We are more aggressive because of the thatchy nature of 328.

Just before seeding we put down a 5-10-10 granular pre-plant fertilizer and spray the greens with 4 oz per acre of Primo to slow down the bermuda competition.

JJ: What else?

PB: Well, I like to apply Subdue the day before I expect germination. I take a one gallon pot and add soil and sow some seed the week before we do the greens. By checking the pot daily it is easier to see how long it takes for germination rather than trying to pick out the seedlings in the bermuda greens.

JJ: What about your peak season and

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transition management?

PB: We hand mow exclusively, double cutting as many as 5 times per week. We skip Sundays and Thursdays. I've found that double cutting, even at higher heights, produces a denser stand of grass and a good surface. To take out the overseed we drop the HOC near an 1/8" and top dress aggressively every two weeks. I use Dale Mitchell's top dressing blend that includes 6-9-16 fertilizer, humic acid and wetting agent. I think it helps promote the return of the bermuda. I also cut back the irrigation to every other night.

JJ: Are you using growth regulators?

PB: I think Primo has been one of the best advances in our industry. We used to bail hay in the summer. My club was built in 1919. We have a Heinz 57 variety of grasses out there. It's like a miracle providing uniformity, density and reducing seedheads and clippings. We are almost wall to wall in using it. I go 10 oz/A on my tees and 12-13 oz/A in the roughs.

Joe Ondo, Winter Pines GC, Winter Park.



JJ: Joe, what are you doing different these days?

JO: We used to seed the first of November and try to be up and growing by the Thanksgiving holidays which is a busy time for us. This year we seeded the first week in December. We stayed with our Gator, Derby and Regal rye mix at 30-35 pounds per thousand and added 2-5 pounds of Winter Play Poa triv per thousand two weeks later to fill in any voids or thin pots after the rye was up. It was one of our best catches ever! Next year, less rye and more Poa triv.

JJ: Anything else unusual?

JO: We have seven greens that are new. We spiked all the greens three to four ways, but we also verticut the older greens two ways before seeding. We used the Rubigan program to treat some greens that had a Poa annua problem in the past.

But we will just monitor them next year. Because of the age difference we also supplement our IBDU and Liquid fertilizer program with some 0-8-16 on the newer greens.

JJ: How about transition?

JO: As you know we are a very busy public course so we try to hold the overseeding until Memorial Day. We spike weekly in March and lightly verticut going deeper gradually. Then we renovate in June. If the collars are weak we just do the greens. I increase the fertility by using 19-0-17 and 1/2 pound per thousand of ammonium sulfate or nitrate.

JJ: Have you tried growth regulators?

JO: Last year was the first year. I put some on the fairways once and watched the turf response. We used it on our range and wetter fairways. The turf tightened up and could support the weight of our large mower. I'm not sure about using it on greens or tees. If you have a disease, how do you grow it out? Not ready to go once per month, but it is a tool that can be used under special circumstances.

Mark Hopkins, Sun N' Lake, Sebring.

JJ: Mark, tell me something new?

MH: Well, I use straight Gator ryegrass at 30 pounds per thousand. We close each nine for a week. I verticut and drag brush them the day before we seed. I use Harrell's 6-12-18 starter mix the day after the seed goes down. We keep them moist till they germinate. I keep them at 1/4" for a month and drop them to 5/32" after January 1st.

JJ: How about routine management?

MH: From January on we lightly verticut and top dress every week and a half to two weeks conditions permitting. We try to maintain green speeds between 8 and 9. By mid April we are verticutting and aerifying. I check greens color and clippings harvest to determine when to fertilize. Generally, we apply 14-2-14 once per month with an iron supplement for color as needed. Going into the renovation we'll pump them up with a little sulfate or nitrate to stimulate the bermuda.

JJ: Are you a Primo fan also?

MH: Haven't used it! Going to use it

this year. We are closing nine holes this summer to rebuild some greens and I'll use it on the fairways to save time. Then we'll see how it goes!

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Editor's Note: America On Line E-mail from CPTxAggie from a "GCS newsletter in the Northwest."