



1998-99 Overseeding Season

BY JOEL D. JACKSON, CGCS

Superintendents have developed a comfort zone with the overseeding ritual based on their local course conditions and member expectations; geographic location and average weather patterns; past performance of seed varieties and management routines; and timing of special events. Last year El Niño turned the winter season into a nightmare for many superintendents and golfers alike.

Superintendents can't always select the best time to overseed based on current weather data or predictions. They are forced to select seeding dates based more on club activities and tournaments.

The Disney Golf Classic in October and the Bryant Gumbel Celebrity Tournament in November come to mind. We were often seeding courses the first of December after all the major events were over.

Last year, we got caught by El Niño's rains and application after application of seed was followed by heavy rains. The courses that were able to seed early last year generally were more successful.

As if it weren't enough of a challenge all winter to get the greens in acceptable shape, the second half of the season turned into a record-setting drought and heat wave.

All that seed applied again and again to produce a marketable playable surface choked out the bermudagrass and then shriveled up under the wilting heat, leaving big bare patches on the greens. If superintendents tried (or were forced) to maintain tight greens instead of reacting to the conditions, they generally had a rough transition.

What's in store for us this year? El Niño shouldn't make a repeat appearance. That phenomenon is usually on a two to three year cycle. Tad Altman,

Stonebridge CC, Naples; Scott Bell, Bent Pine GC, Vero Beach; and Joe Ondo, CGCS, Winter Pines GC, Winter Park wrote articles on their plans and we have four more superintendents from around the state participating in a *Florida Green* overseeding questionnaire to share their plans and tips for 1998. Good luck!

Overseeding Procedures for Greens and Tees

We overseed around the second week of November.

On the greens we will put down 10 pounds of poa trivialis per 1000 sq. ft.: 4 pounds in two directions using a drop spreader and 2 pounds with a rotary spreader over the top. In about a month we put down another 2 pounds with a rotary spreader. The tees will be seeded with a drop spreader at 15 pounds per 1000 square feet of a seed mix which is 85% perennial rye grass and 15% poa trivialis. No other areas will be overseeded.

After seed is spread, we drag it in with a mat that has carpet attached to it. The greens and tees will not have any seed bed prep except for a topdressing around a week prior to seeding.

After seeding is complete, the mowing height will not be changed. Greens will be mowed at .156 (5/32) inch, and tees will be at 3/8 inch. The only change in mowing practice will be raising the turf groomers to keep from pulling out the seedlings.

Two weeks after germination we lightly topdress the greens and apply fertilizer at 3/4 pound per 1000 sq. ft. Four weeks after germination we put the groomers down to bedknife height.

Six weeks after germination with proper weather conditions, we mow the greens at .140 (9/64) inch. At this height we do regularly scheduled fertility programs. Some of the fertilizer applications are granular and some are foliar. Fertigation supplements are applied most of the winter at low rates.

When all is right with the weather, it is usually smooth sailing until spring. Unfortunately we have not had many "right with the weather" times lately.

To get through these difficult times we raise the cutting height to acceptable levels and increase foliar applications of plant health products (like medicines you take when you have a cold or flu). All situations are evaluated at time of need.

A light topdressing is applied every two weeks during cooler months. We put a microbe solution on our greens and tees monthly all year.

After implementing this program we have decreased our fungicide use to a very low level. Last year with the heavy rains we had good turf quality with little fungus. The biggest difficulty was lack of sunlight that required us to apply more plant nutrients directly to the leaf tissue more often.

Another thing we found out last winter was that our pre-emergent chemicals did not last as long as they should because of rain flushing. Our second pre-emergent application will be applied earlier this time to keep the volunteer rye from becoming a problem.

After 14 years of overseeding under my belt, I have come to the conclusion that if you keep it simple and stay on top of the program you can get a great final product and still sleep at night.

Tad Altman, GCS
Stonebridge Country Club

Managing Overseeding Through the Season

After many years of overseeding, we have established a strong-enough stand of bentgrass so that we do not have to overseed any more. As the years progressed, certain greens got stronger bentgrass cover and over the past 10 years we have converted a couple of greens per year to where we are now.

Bent Pine now has all of the greens predominately in bentgrass. During the summer, some greens will show some bermudagrass trying to reestablish, but we try to keep it from spreading too much.

The decision to overseed is only the beginning. Decisions need to be based on geographic location, rates, type of seed and time of desired transition.

The decision needs to be made to de-