



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-



termine if you want to “interseed” (mainly for color) or if you want a full-blown overseeding where you establish a solid bentgrass or poa trivialis putting surface. We always overseeded to establish a solid bentgrass surface. Years ago we seeded with a bent/poa trivialis mix but we found in late April and May, the poa would discolor as the temperatures rose. We then used only bentgrass. We targeted June as our transition month.

We always overseeded during the first week of October. For bentgrass to be fully established and growing laterally via rhizomes, you need 12 weeks. Usually by Christmas the seed was mature. We cut back on the fertility before Labor Day in order to slow the bermudagrass growth rate. Two to three weeks prior to overseeding we applied a starter fertilizer, liquid organic phosphorus. We have had the luxury of the club closing down during the first two weeks of October for seasonal preparations, including overseeding.

The Sunday evening before closing we verticut, spiked, mowed and sprayed the greens so that on Monday morning we could seed the greens in the dew and see our spreader tracks. We verticut with verticut reels mounted on our Toro Greensmaster 3000Ds. As our Tifdwarf greens got older, we verticut as many as six or seven times per green.

This is a critical call based on the green’s health, age and fertility. You need to get good seed-to-soil contact to help the seedlings root and establish quickly. After verticutting, we mowed to clean up and then spiked with our trap-rake-mounted spikers. At this point we applied Subdue fungicide to protect the seeds and seedlings from Pythium and then went home for the night.

The next morning we seeded into the dew, watered it in and, once the greens were dry, topdressed fairly heavily with a 90/10 coarse mix. After dragging in the mix, we fertilized with an organic greens fertilizer. Finally we sprayed the greens with a broad-spectrum fungicide and insecticide. For the next five or six days we kept the greens wet through a combination of irrigation and hand watering. Usually after four or five days, the seed began to germinate.

As we all know at seasonal clubs, we are judged by our greens from November to May. They are often the topic of choice on the cocktail circuit. Generally the decisions that you make and the actions that you take in September, October and November determine the success or failure of your whole season.

Being closed is extremely valuable to establishing an excellent putting surface. We would wait for seven to ten days until we finally walk-mowed the greens at 1/4 inch. For the next month we scouted for pests and mowed as little as possible. We tried to skip mowing on any weekday morning without dew. We waited a month before we began to lower the cut.

At this point we switched to a liquid-only fertilizer program, which included a program of liquid micronutrients and organics. This benefited us because, as the height of cut was lowered, the exposed dry, granular fertilizer affected ball roll and we would have to mow without buckets.

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Remember that good seed-to-soil contact needs to be made, but you still must have some bermuda around to protect and hold the new seedlings. Finally, watch your mowing heights. Mowing too low, too early can stress a good stand of grass. Don’t forget about your greens during the weekends and hopefully you’ll have a great stand of grass all season.

*Scott Bell, CGCS
Bent Pine Golf Club*

Winter Pines Overseeding

The past three years we have been overseeding the Monday after Thanksgiving because November is still a very

busy month while December and early January are slow. Also the greens were so nice in November we hated to start seeding into them. After last year, we have decided to seed around the first of November just in case. We have been using a mix of ryegrass and poa trivialis, but this year we will go with a blend of Sabre II and Winterplay poa trivialis on the greens.

We will start with 5 lbs./1000 sq. ft. of the poa triv blend and continue dusting the greens every week until we get the coverage we want, which is 12 to 15 lbs./1000 sq. ft.. This way we feel we can give our players a better putting surface with minimal disruption in shorter time frame. Some of our weak greens may get a little ryegrass to help them out. Collars and approaches will be seeded with 15 lbs./1000 sq.ft. of Brightstar perennial ryegrass. Tees will be overseeded with 15 lbs./1000 of Cutter Lowgrow perennial ryegrass. Three of our par-three fairways and the clubhouse area will be seeded with Brightstar ryegrass at 10 lbs./1000 sq. ft.. The rest of the fairways and roughs will not be seeded.

Primo has not been used yet on our bermuda for overseeding establishment. The shorter days, cutting back on nitrogen, and regular verticutting still seem to be working so far. The greens will be verticut in two directions and then lightly topdressed about a week before overseeding to establish a good seed bed. Tees, collars and approaches will be verticut one day earlier and mowed down to 3/8 inch. After seeding, these areas will be topdressed with an 80/20 soil blend and matted in with a rug. No topdressing will be used on the greens after seeding.

Mowing on greens will begin at about