



Successful Transition from Overseeding takes...

Planning, Preparation, Patience

After the disaster of El Nino last year, I think the topic of transition made a few people gun shy about contributing on this subject, but I managed to find a few brave souls who offered some comments about what they hope to achieve during the 1999 transition phase of overseeding management.

I found some common threads running through their comments: Planning was one, with grass variety selection being a key ingredient at the Grand Cypress and Celebration Golf Clubs followed by booking maintenance schedules a year in advance.

Preparation was next and that covers everything from having healthy turf in the fall going into overseeding to managing cultural practices in the spring.

And last but not least, patience! Patience in dealing with changing growing conditions... in letting your turf cover dictate the timing of some of your practices... in taking into account that with these persistent new grass varieties, maybe we should be calling it "summer transition" instead of spring transition.

Given normal conditions, it's relatively easy to grow turf in the dead of winter and the dead of summer.

But when the sun crosses the equator twice a year and the seasons begin to change, Florida superintendents are asked to maintain good playing condi-

tions while growing two or three different types of grasses at the same time. That's when patience by superintendents and golfers alike pays off.

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little more seed here and there, babied it a little bit and we always got there.

"Last year we never made it and we had a rough winter. I've never had so much explaining to do about course conditions

to company officials and the pro shop for the guests in my entire 15 years.

"That experience made me realize that you'd better have a sense of urgency about getting the overseed established before the heavy play season starts. We are a resort and driven by our seasonal play. Guests arriving from up North for some high-priced winter golf don't care if you just had 40 inches of rain in 60 days, and they don't want explanations either.

"I will say this and then we can move on: My management team is pretty well educated about the

business. They trust me and they play a lot of golf at other places. They knew we weren't the only place having some problems. I used the reports from the USGA and from Dr. Elliott to give them the scientific agronomic reasons we were struggling with thin turf.

"January was the worst of it because we had to have tournament conditions in place for the LPGA HealthSouth event. We wore the place out. After that we started to slowly improve. Like I said, I thought we were bullet proof!

"Hello!"

Learning those tough lessons from El Nino, Alex is going to try a couple of things to ease the management of his



Grand Cypress superintendent Tom Alex shows the two different ryegrasses used in the seed blend applied to the rough. The larger "intermediate rye" plant on the right should transition quicker in the spring, giving the bermudagrass a better chance to fill in. Photo by Joel Jackson.

Tough Lessons Generate Some New Ideas

Tom Alex has been the superintendent/manager/director of golf course maintenance at the Grand Cypress Golf Club for the past 15 years. Known for the excellent conditioning of his golf courses, Alex admitted that last year's overseeding season was a real eye opener. It's difficult not to frame some of the practices we use in relation to what happened during El Nino last year.

"Going into last year, I always thought we were bulletproof," he said. "We have the resources and the talent to respond to unusual conditions. We always dusted a