



threshold and we are being cost effective? While our post-emerge chemical costs are up some, the overall result by eliminating one preemergent application has saved us maybe 25-30 percent in chemical costs."

Summing up the topic, Alex said, "Dwight Kummer at Bay Hill put it best when he said, 'Think about all the practices we do when we have normal conditions. We can get by. But when conditions go sour and we try to maintain the same practices, we can have major failures.'

"That shows you how close to the edge we keep everything all the time. Two weeks of low sunlight and heavy play and all of a sudden you're in trouble. Last year kind of drove that nail home to me.

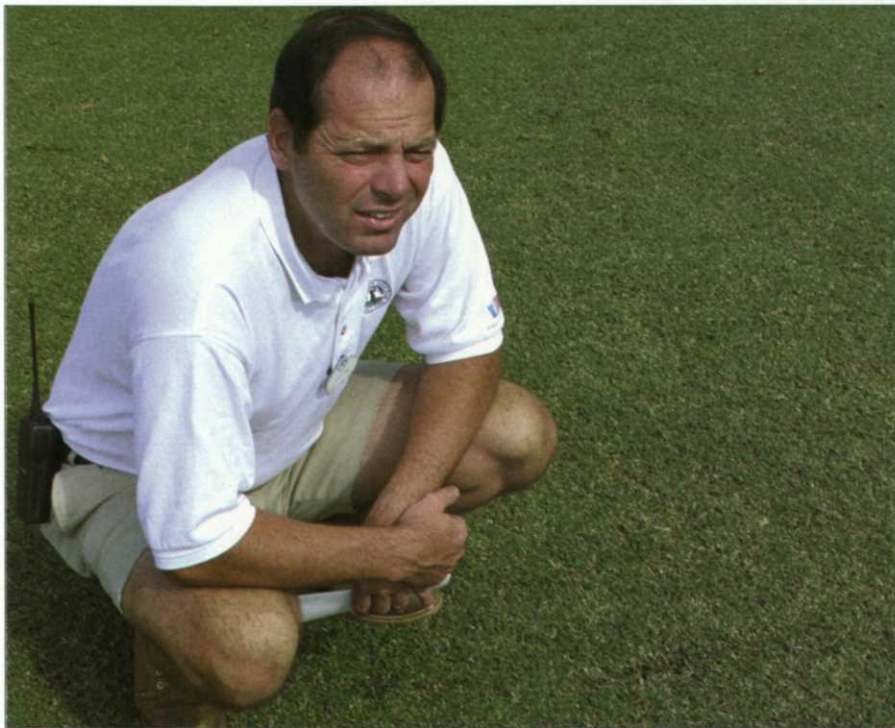
"Listen guys! Pay attention! I mean it's what we have to do. It's our business, but when the weather gets bad you'd better respond. Raise the heights of cut. Punch some holes. Watch your fungicide levels and keep those pin locations moving."

After a two-hour interview and ride around the course a final comment from as only Tommy can put it, "Are we done? You should get a paragraph out of that!"

Editors Note: *The Grand Cypress Golf Club will be one of the stops on the GCSAA Turfgrass Tour during the conference and show in February 1999.*

Poa Triv Plays Well, Exits Gracefully at Celebration

John De Matteo has been the superintendent at the new Disney Celebration Golf Club since it opened in April,



Superintendent John De Matteo checks the progress of the Poa triv germination in a fairway at the Celebration Golf Club. This is the third year in a row that De Matteo has seeded his fairways with Poa trivialis. Photo by Joel Jackson.

1996. Prior to that John was a regional superintendent for American Golf, responsible for eight courses in New York. John also spent eight years working as a technical representative for Loft Seed, Inc.

De Matteo has a different approach to overseeding than most, which helps set up his transition program.

"When we opened in 1996 we didn't want to have a lot of competition with the new bermudagrass, so we overseeded the entire course with *Poa trivialis*. We have

since modified our practices to use perennial ryegrass in the roughs to give better definition and contrast to the fairways which are still 100 percent *Poa trivialis*.

"I am also using ryegrass on the tees for better wear tolerance. The greens are still 100 percent *Poa trivialis*.

"There several reasons we still use *Poa trivialis* on the fairways.

"First and foremost is the way it transitions once the weather warms up. As the bermudagrass gets stronger with the heat, the *Poa trivialis* melts out, providing less

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competition than some of the perennial ryegrasses.

"Second, the *Poa trivialis* gives a great playing surface — almost like a northern bentgrass fairway.

"Third, the small seed nestles down into the 419 bermudagrass during overseeding and reduces the chance of washing away if we get rains during establishment.

"Fourth, since it is a low-growing, fine-bladed variety, it is easy to mow and clean up fairways if you haven't been able to mow fairways due to bad weather. You know how thick ryegrass can get when you can't get to it!

"The *Poa trivialis* is seeded into the fairways at a rate of 90 pounds per acre. We don't do any special seedbed preparation. We keep our cut at .5 inch before and after seeding. It usually takes about two weeks longer for the seed to show up in the fairways than the greens. The Tifdwarf collars around the greens were a different story. We did verticut them twice with a Mat-A-Way, once this summer and again

in September before seeding on Nov. 2 this year."

So like Tom Alex, John is utilizing a grass-variety selection to help his transition in the spring. Having worked with Loft Seed, John believes in actively growing all the grasses on the course and letting nature take its course. While things can be done to encourage the bermudagrass, De Matteo says superintendents shouldn't resort to drastic measures like holding back the irrigation, or scalping the turf, or getting nitrogen rates too high.

"If superintendents want to play with the irrigation," he said, "they can maybe do more deep irrigation and reduce frequency, but you don't want to reduce the overall moisture. While trying to stress and thin the overseeding, you are also making the reemerging bermudagrass weak.

"I don't change the height of cut until our greens fee rates go down in May. Then I raise the height of cut to take the pressure off the bermudagrass. The warming weather will take out the *Poa trivialis*. How-

ever, we will lower the height of cut in the roughs to open up the ryegrass to allow more light to get to the bermudagrass.

"I do increase my nitrogen levels when the nights are consistently in the 60-degree range. I apply straight ammonium sulfate at .5 pounds per month for a couple of months when the bermudagrass shows signs of moving. At this time we also start slicing fairways and increase our normal winter spiking frequency on the greens to at least two times per week."

I asked De Matteo how El Nino affected his program last year.

"We were very fortunate last year," he said. "We had our seed down and up before the rains hit, so we got lucky on the front end. In the spring, I noticed the *Poa triv* hanging in longer because of the dry, cool nights that ran into May. The lower humidity actually helped all the cool-season grasses persist.

"In fact, when I worked in California, we had a heck of a time with transitions with the cool, dry weather out there. People

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don't realize how much transition is due to mild disease pressure that also helps to thin out the overseeding during humid weather. Last spring I was seeing substantial overseeding on the greens into June until the temperatures sky rocketed."

De Matteo hasn't seen the need for any preemergent weed control so far on the young course.

"If we develop some severe *Poa annua* areas, I would consider spraying them out and reseed them since *Poa trivialis* will germinate at cooler temperatures than ryegrass. So far we just don't have a problem that warrants the time and expense."

Acknowledging the poor growing conditions that did befall the state last year, De Matteo said, "The best thing you can do for the turf is to raise the height of cut. In fact, my goal next year is to experiment with having good consistent greens without mowing them down to 1/8 of an inch or lower like we have done.

"In talking to our customers, I have heard them comment on how much they enjoy the course down the street. I know they aren't as manicured as we are, but they do have nice, thick turf on the greens. These golfers never mentioned the word 'speed.'

"When our greens fees go down in summer and we try to keep the greens on the edge, I don't think our customers really appreciate it. I'd much rather have good, consistent, healthy greens at that time of year without beating our heads against the wall."

Editor's Note: *The Celebration Golf Club and Community will also be one of the sites visited on the GCSAA Turfgrass Tour during the conference and show in February 1999. The Celebration Golf Club is managed by American Golf.*

You Can't Always Put Your Finger on What Happened

Spring transition is often an intangible process, and my results have ranged from, "When did it happen?" to "Why are the greens dirt?"

Fort Myers Country Club is a public golf course. Our greens fees go down in the spring and the number of players increases.

May is full of tournaments. This limits our ability to do any spring renovation.

What we try to do is have a seamless conversion from turf which is 80 percent perennial ryegrass and 20 percent *Poa trivialis* back to the host Tifdwarf bermudagrass. Through the winter we will spike weekly and lightly topdress every 2-3 weeks. We will start light verticutting on a weekly basis in March if the weather is warm.

Our height of cut for the season ranges from .175-.200 inches depending on the growing conditions. When we are pretty sure that the last cold front has passed through, we will lower our cut to .156 inch.

We don't change our fertility program except a slight increase to encourage the bermudagrass to cover thin areas more rapidly.

We attempt to control the emergence of volunteer ryegrass and *Poa annua* with a Barricade preemergent application in October. If we get some random germination around the first of the year, we will spray those areas with Kerb.

MIKE MONGOVEN, CGCS
Fort Myers Country Club

Transition Time Seems to Come Later and Later

It seems the transition time from overseeded turf back to bermudagrass has gotten longer and longer over the years. The new bentgrasses, *Poa trivialis* and ryegrasses have become more heat tolerant and seem to want to stay around longer than I would like. Other than the normal slicing, spiking, light verticutting, lowering the cut and other usual cultural practices, we have found a few things that work well for us.

When Daylight Saving Time goes into effect in April, we start applying one pound of nitrogen per week to encourage the bermudagrass. This fertilizer push is a combination of quick- and slow-release granulars and liquid forms of nitrogen. These applications continue on both greens and tees until we aerate around the first of June.

We like to wait until we have about a 60-70 percent bermudagrass base showing through the overseeding so transition isn't too quick. We also use wetting agents to get us through warm and dry spring

periods when the transition is too rapid.

No matter how much we plan or what methods we use, Mother Nature has a lot to do with the success of all these practices.

JOE ONDO, CGCS
Winter Pines G.C.

Healthy Turf at Overseeding Makes Transition Easier

Transition starts before you drop the first seed. Healthy bermudagrass in October and November usually means healthy bermudagrass in June.

A lot of superintendents are dealing with tournaments through April, which can limit the start of any transition program. At Isleworth we start grooming in March to enhance our green speed, not to thin our overseeding. However, it must have some thinning effect. We begin light verticutting and topdressing every two weeks until we aerify in June. Other than spiking once a week, we do not get any more aggressive with cultural practices until aerifying in June. I have aerified in March and April, but the benefit is not worth the loss of valuable playing time.

Patience is the key. Maybe the term should be "Summer Transition." If I have overseeding on the greens through June and into July, I am probably having a pretty decent transition. I am not talking about a lot of *Poa trivialis* and bentgrass, but enough that you just keep seeing it here and there until it is finally gone around Independence Day.

Fertilizing is another tricky issue. The longer you can hold off without applying a pound of nitrogen with a dry product, the better. Although we use cool-season grasses as annuals, they are perennials and given the chance to "harden off," they will.

Often when you are trying to give the bermudagrass a jump start, you are also feeding a plant that is already a little stronger and just as intent on surviving. Of course, this tiny bit of wisdom is really relative to your seeding rate. If you have more bermudagrass than overseeding, then push when you are ready. If you don't have more bermudagrass, be careful.

BUCK BUCKNER
Isleworth Country Club