



Growing the New Grasses

Central Florida Winter Pines GC
Joe Ondo, CGCS

After sodding our small practice green with SeaDwarf paspalum to test how it performed here in Orlando, the decision was made to convert three greens at a time on our front nine. We set up temporary greens to provide a full 18 holes for our members and customers.

After stripping the sod, we Roto-tilled, shaped, fumigated and sodded the putting surfaces. We installed a 5-foot wide paspalum collar to help discourage the Tifway 419 from encroaching into the green. We edge the paspalum/bermuda interface with a stick edger

regularly. It would take an average of six weeks to get the greens in shape to open for play. Then we would start the next three holes.

The greens on the front nine vary in make up, we have some push-up greens that have been amended with sand and some we rebuilt in the past to USGA specs with 90-10 mix. We fertilize monthly with a low N and high K fertilizer and apply a foliar 4-0-0 paspalum mix with minors and Primo. A preventive fungicide program works best as we find the paspalum slow to recover from problem areas. We are still tweaking that program.

Since the greens were all sodded, I think once we do some core aerifying this summer, it will continue to get better. The paspalum certainly did hold its color this past winter and we used black topdressing applied every two weeks for heat retention. The back nine Tifdwarf greens also held up better this winter with the black sand.

I am still learning about this grass by talking to other paspalum superintendents and tweaking our program. I feel it will only get better. If given the choice, I probably would sprig instead of sod next time.

Champion ultradwarf green at the Royal Poinciana Club in Naples. Photo by Joel Jackson.

South Florida: Royal Poinciana Club

Matt Taylor, CGCS

When I first arrived we had Tifdwarf. It was good but, with many clubs in the area installing ultradwarfs greens, it was hard to keep up.

We had pretty good dwarf greens with basically the same management as for ultradwarfs with grooming, vertical mowing, topdressing and fertility. We just could not really get much below .156 inches for a long period, so we had to work our tails off to get green speeds of 10.

We had a TifEagle putting green here at Royal Poinciana when I arrived in 2000. It was nice and the members loved it. I had grown Champion at Bonita Bay East for three years previously and I was very comfortable with how it could perform. Not many guys had figured out how to manage it back then. Honestly, in my opinion most greens at that time could not compare to Champion. So we decided to go with Champion at RP and have never looked back. We changed out 18 greens and the putting green the summer of 2000, and the other 18 and practice greens in 2003.

Today in 2011 many guys have figured out all of the varieties and the condition of greens no matter what variety, which are, for the most part, all excellent.

None of them has great color retention when it gets really cold. One type goes off color at 55 degrees and one goes off at 57 degrees. Really?

I think the biggest game changers are fertility and Primo. The fertility programs have changed so much, much lower N rates today maybe half – or less than half – of what we used to apply for dwarf. But the real breakthrough has been guys getting on and staying on Primo programs. The rates are all around 3 - 4 oz./A on a weekly basis. This produces speeds well above 10 with zero stress on the plants. Heights of cut seem to be ranging .110 - .135 inches.

South Florida: The CC of Naples

Bill Davidson

When the ultradwarfs came out, everyone got the fever that “lower is better” since we all were struggling to provide “fast” green speeds. To think that you could mow a grass at .100 inch compared to the standard .140 inch was crazy. So the old philosophy of “if one is good, two are better” kicked in and guys headed for the basement trying to outdo themselves and their buddies. I think now guys are wising up and are instead figuring out how to mow at .110”-.150” and still have speed and healthier turf.

I’ve grown TifEagle and Mini-Verde and I can say that the management of each under my care is essentially the same. The Mini-Verde has the best root system by far. It is not uncommon to have roots 4-5 inches deep

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HANDS ON

in the winter. Right now they are at the bottom of the cup in some spots when not aerated or verticut. The Eagle is a shallower-rooted grass that thrives in the upper bio-mass of the soil profile. My Eagle always seemed to root into that 4-6 inch organic layer in good times and move up into the 2-3" range in the winter.

As far as verticutting and top dressing, I'm sure you've been following the Facebook postings in the "golf group" and there seems to be no right answer. The results are the only things that matter; how you get there is up to the individual grass grower.

Internet: From Gary Grigg's Facebook Group "Golf Maintenance"

Dr. Bryan Unruh, Darren Davis and Bill Davidson

Dr. Unruh, Davis and Davidson commented on the question and concerns about using finer sands to top dress the finer-textured ultradwarfs. While Dr. Unruh expressed concern over forming a restrictive layer by using too much fine material, Darren and Bill found that doing regular light dustings with the fine material during the golf season for smoothness is not a problem as long as you are diligent with your more aggressive vertication and aerification programs during spring renovations.



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