One of the key elements in managing the aggressive Champion ultradwarf putting surface is a regular verticutting program. Photo by Matt Taylor.

As thin as these are, you cannot grind them successfully.

I have seen other people who have other ultradwarfs move the position of the front roller and/or the bed bar to accommodate low cuts and undulations of greens. All of these solutions work.

We have gone from a Toro 1000 to the new Toro 800 walking greens mower on our more undulated greens. This has also helped. If you are fortunate enough to be involved in a new construction of the greens and are planning on one of the ultradwarfs, this is something you should consider. The undulations, unless very minor, will cause problems when you get the heights down.

If you are considering renovation of existing greens, you may want to consider reshaping severely undulated greens if the slope changes quickly. Slope changes of greater than 1 percent over a small area, will cause problems during mowing.

The new varieties of ultradwarfs can definitely produce some of the finest putting surfaces possible in Florida without overseeding. They also have disadvantages which should be considered before planting.

Most people I have spoken to who have planted one of the new varieties feel as if the risk is definitely worth the reward.

Matt Taylor is director of golf operations for the Bonita Bay East golf courses.
Opinion

Are We Opening the Gates to Paradise or Pandora's Box?

There is a new generation of turfgrasses that have been released for use on golf course putting greens. Most of them have been under real-world maintenance and performance conditions in Florida for only two to three years at most. Are they the answer to the fast greens problems superintendents have faced in the last decade? The answer is yes and no.

I wish I could just say yes and we could all ride off into the sunset and live happily ever after, but with fewer than two dozen courses in the state growing at least three different varieties of the new ultradwarf bermudagrasses, there are a lot of unanswered questions. But even this early on, I think there are some realities that need to be discussed before these grasses get a bum rap for being something they aren't.

The one and only thing I will stipulate to is that these grasses will tolerate a lower cut. They thrive nicely on 1/8 and 1/10 inch cut. Notice I did not say they made for faster greens... only that you can cut them lower. These grasses are denser and that density keeps the ball roll at a medium speed unless you adopt a thorough grooming program. And that is where the misconception of these grasses begins.

Because these grasses require a low height of cut, architects must begin modifying how much they contour the greens or there will be scalping. Yet architects are already specifying these grasses for some of their new courses without much performance data to go by. That's the first mistake: building in a problem.

If the design and the grass is compatible, then the next area that is overlooked is that of the club's mission and purpose. If it is a low-volume, private club that can close one day per week, then the necessary grooming of these ultradwarfs can be accomplished and provide the expected fast greens performance.

But if a course is a resort or other high-volume venue that must keep the doors open at all times, I don't recommend these new grasses at this time. The putting surface will not be as good as a well-maintained Tifdwarf greens if the necessary verticutting and topdressing can't be performed with regularity.

I have already seen a golf course struggle with performance expectations because they are unwilling to provide closed times. They want that fast putting surface but there is always a group that must be accommodated for tee times. They won't commit to giving the maintenance staff the time to manage the new grass properly. You can buy a Mercedes but if you don't change the oil regularly, don't expect it to perform like the precision machine you thought you bought.

With some of the varieties on the market, it looks like once a year you may have to get very aggressive with your verticutting program during renovation to keep thatch under control. The timing and severity of this process must be factored into the schedule of events of the club and with weather conditions, no one will be surprised during the recovery period.

Performance of these grasses also depends on the precision of the mowing units that must achieve a good
clean cut. It used to be that a good mechanic could tune up a cutting unit with a tournament bedknife and grinder and lapping machine and keep the mowers cutting at 1/8 of an inch for the two-day member-guest tournament or a four-day professional golf event. With these new grasses, mechanics must make sure the mowers can handle .125 inches or lower heights every day.

With a lower growing habit than Tifdwarf, these grasses require even thinner bedknives. Thinner metal means less wear tolerance and faster obsolescence with all the extra topdressing that must be done, which means more money in the budget for reels and bedknives. It is a price that has to be paid for lower-cut greens. And remember: lower cut doesn’t necessarily mean faster unless the other cultural practices are done frequently.

One superintendent who has experienced two of these new grasses has stated that sooner or later everyone will be managing these grasses, that they are the grasses of the future. I won’t argue against that declaration except to note that currently the most successful stands of the new ultradwarfs are at private clubs where budgets are more liberal and they have the time — including off-season low play — to manage the turf properly.

These ultradwarfs may be paradise for some courses right now but they may be also be a Pandora’s box of problems and disappointments for those courses not quite ready for the requirements that come with them.

JOEL JACKSON, CGCS

Unintentional bonus of ultradwarf greens! Mole crickets seem to prefer the Tifway 419 collar instead of the Floradwarf putting surface at the Legends Course at the Orange Lake Resort in Kissimmee. Photo by Joel Jackson.
When I first started in the golf business, working on the construction crew at Sugar Mill Country Club way back in 1969, my boss used to tell all us inexperienced teenagers that we “obviously weren’t tractor operators”, or “carpenters”, or “concrete men,” or very good at any of the various tasks associated with building a golf course, clubhouse, and maintenance facility.

Duh! I thought it pretty obvious that 18-year-olds weren’t going to have much practical experience, especially the various skills connected with the construction of a golf course and its attendant buildings. We provided strong backs and quick minds at minimum wage, and by the end of the summer I realized what a bargain we had been even with our occasional missteps.

Over the years I’ve realized I’m not a lot of things, or at least not very good at a lot of things, though I’ve accepted responsibility and tried to do a credible job with many endeavors. So it is with my association work - the Palm Beach GC SA, Golfweek, the Florida GC SA, The Florida Green, and now FTGA… I just plow ahead doing the best I can to improve our profession and our industry, and hope that others will see the value in the effort and help out those of us who can and do serve as officers of our associations.

Which brings me to my point. Damn few of you are helping out, and I find it hard to believe that you don’t believe that the education and research our associations support aren’t of benefit to you. I realize that not everyone can serve on a board, or even a committee, but the percentage of those who do anything on behalf of the profession that sustains them and their families is appalling! We’re not talking about a social club that you join if you meet and like some of the people in it; we’re talking about your profession, and your obligation to give something back to it and to those that have helped you achieve your status and salary. You joined the day you decided to become a golf course superintendent.

What’s that? You don’t like Mark Jarrell? or Scott Wahlin? or Mike Perham? or Darren Davis? So what - if we all dropped dead tomorrow, the FGCSA and FTGA would still be in existence and working to find ways to make our industry better, and you would still be a golf course superintendent living on the edge. If we’re not doing a good job, then tell us how we can do better.

Don’t like the University of Florida, because their football team beats your alma mater’s football team year in and year out? Get over it! The University of Florida is our state’s land grant institution and is charged with conducting a turfgrass program consisting of teaching, research, and extension. Past weaknesses in the program have been, or are being, addressed. We now have a turfgrass coordinator, Dr. John Cisar. New positions are being filled. Since October, we have a man in charge of UF/IFAS, Dr. Mike Martin, who recognizes the value of golf and turf to the people of this state, and the turfgrass program is poised to become the leading program in the country.

Seventeen research proposals were recently submitted by UF turf scientists to the FTGA Awards Committee, totalling nearly $511,000. Obviously, we don’t have the funding necessary to support even a fraction of these proposals, but an industry the size of the golf and turf industry in Florida should be able to handle this amount on an annual basis. With over 1400 golf courses in the state, this would amount to about $350 annually from each club - a drop in the bucket out of the typical club’s budget.

I find it hard to believe that anyone who is reading this would disagree with the need for turfgrass research to help make our jobs easier, more secure, safer, cheaper, and friendlier to the environment. I also find it hard to believe there are so many in this industry who take advantage of the hard work of others without making a contribution themselves. Won’t you please help those of us who are trying to help you?
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Contact Joel D. Jackson, Editor for more information. Phone: 407-248-1971. Fax: 407-248-1971. E-mail: FLGrn@aol.com. All slides and photographs should include identification of persons in the picture and the name of the photographer.

HANDS ON TOPICS for 1999:
- Share your best practices and tips for these upcoming topics. Slides or photographs are encouraged.
- Fall 1999 Issue - Superintendent Image and Visibility
- Spring 2000 Issue - Time Management Tips

Call for Articles
- Summer 2000 Issue - Insect Control Since FQPA

SPOTLIGHT: People and events making news in Florida. From award winners to chapter tournaments and other accomplishments. Send in your story.

SUPERINTENDENT'S JOURNAL: Personal observations or experiences related to any phase of the turf management profession.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: General management topics beyond turf. Examples: Education, facilities, personnel, computers, training, etc.

INDUSTRY NEWS: News items of interest to Florida superintendents from allied associations in the turf/horticulture industry.

OPINION: Exactly what it means! Articles voicing a personal point of view on any topic concerning Florida superintendents.

RESEARCH: A section reserved primarily for university and technical authors to report on research results within the turf industry. Also reports of practical on-course testing.

RUB OF THE GREEN: Articles and anecdotes with a humorous twist.

STEWARDSHIP: Superintendents are invited to submit ideas and articles about environmental issues and initiatives at their courses.

Wanted: Slides and photographs to help tell the stories!

1999 Florida Green Photo Contest

Category 1 - Wildlife on the Course:
- Includes mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians.

Category 2 - Course Landscape:
- Formal Plantings: includes annuals, shrubs, trees, entrance and tee signs.

Category 3 - Course Landscape:
- Native Plantings: includes aquatic vegetation, grasses, shrubs, trees and wildflowers.

Category 4 - Scenic Hole Layout Shots: includes sunrises, sunsets, frosts, storms and any other golf hole view.

Prizes
- 1st Place ($100) and 2nd Place ($50) in each category.
- Editor's Choice-Best Overall Photo - $100.
- All winning entries published in the Fall 1998 issue.

Easy Rules
1. Color prints or slides. Only one entry per category.
2. Photo must be taken on an FGCSA member's course. Photo must be taken by an FGCSA member or a member of his staff.
3. Attach a label to the back of the print or slide which identifies the category, course and photographer. DO NOT WRITE DIRECTLY ON THE BACK OF THE PRINT. Each photo shall be attached to a sheet of 8.5 x 11 lined paper. Line up the photo with the vertical and horizontal lines to square the photo on the page. Attach the print to the paper using a loop of masking tape on the back of the photo. Slides must be easily removable for viewing.
4. A caption identifying the category, course and photographer should be typed or printed on the sheet of paper below the print or slide.
5. Judging will be done by a panel of FGCSA members not participating in the contest.

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Consider yourself a candidate.

Applications for the 2000 Environmental Steward Awards are available from the May issue of Golf Course Management, the GCSAA web site (www.gcsaa.org), affiliated chapter presidents, program sponsors and the GCSAA service center (800/472-7878).

We'll look forward to receiving your application by October 1, 1999.

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A partnership program benefiting
The GCSAA Foundation
fter 18 months of working as your
director of communications, I haven’t
reached a lot of conclusions, but I do
have a greater appreciation for the pieces of the
puzzle that make up the golf industry in Florida.

I have covered our traditional FGCSA
educational sessions and fund-raising events. I
have participated in government-relations
working groups like FQPA, Pesticide Review
Council, and Pesticide Poisoning Surveillance. I
have attended the golf-media-based
International Network of Golf Conference. I am
serving on committees for
GCSAA Publications and
FTGA Conference and Show. I
am a board member of the
Florida Golf Alliance and the
Agricultural Institute of
Florida. I am writing for four
golf publications in addition to
The Florida Green and The
Greensheet. I am not retired!

I have learned that at many
of those activities, turfgrass in
general has not been a very active player, and
my presence in your behalf has been welcome.
Remember, however, that all politics is local and
I can’t be everywhere. Therefore, local chapters
must constantly share the burden of
involvement on issues and then share that
information statewide.

In many arenas superintendents have become
advocates for issues that go beyond their job
descriptions and I would really like to see
owners and managers pick up some of that
slack. Superintendents are employees and
sometimes they jeopardize their “day job” as
they tackle community and association service
issues. Owners and managers in partnership
with superintendents should take more of a lead
in fighting water resource and other
environmental issues. Superintendents have the
expertise, but owners and managers often have
more influential contacts on a daily basis.

It was interesting to attend the ING
conference in Daytona last May where I rubbed
elbows with golf media, golf equipment
manufacturers, marketing reps and other golf-
related businesses. There is a whole world of
golf out there that has only a fleeting interest in
what we deem to be critical issues. While
superintendents are acknowledged as playing an
important role in conditioning golf courses,
these folks are busy attracting players to the
game and outfitting them with the longest
distance golf ball, the “can’t miss” golf club, and
the latest training aid that will improve their
swings. It would be nice if somehow a fraction
the millions of dollars spent on greens fees,
equipment and golf travel each year could find
its way to turf research.

Finally, it seems that apathy keeps rearing its
ugly head as far as participation at local chapter
meetings is concerned. No one seems to know
why more superintendents can’t make it to the
meetings in greater numbers. Associations are
run by those who show up! You don’t have to
spend the whole day. Just attend the business
meeting and educational session. Chapters have
tried having meetings in the morning, afternoon
and night. Some chapters have even picked up
the tab for the meeting so it doesn’t cost the
member anything.

Chapter leaders want to know, “What is the
problem?” Are people job scared or just lazy?
Ever notice how the numbers do go up when the
meeting is held at a new upscale golf course? Do
they have a bone to pick with the chapter
leadership or education programs? If you only
want to be a “checkbook member,” don’t
complain or criticize.

Maybe the pool of truly professional
superintendents is shrinking. Maybe the new
generation either knows it all or doesn’t know
enough. Maybe they haven’t established good
working relationships with their owners and
managers, and they just work hard and endure.
Maybe they lack the confidence and ability to
run a good program that will let them take off
for a few hours once a month to get involved in
their association that seeks to make them
professionally and personally better.

The golf industry is a big puzzle and there are
a lot of ways to look at it. Our piece of the
puzzle holds the key to a lot of solutions to
problems that affect the whole picture. Make a
commitment to be an active partner in putting
the puzzle together.
It's hard to beat the performance of Stardust and Cypress Poa trivialis!

In multi-year trials from the East to the West Coast, these Poa trivs have been tops in color and texture since their release re-defined the overseeding market. An additional bonus, is their higher seed count which give superintendents more coverage for the money. Both are grown under the certification program and this makes the quality of these Poa trivs the standard by which other Poa trivs are measured. But don't take our word for it, take theirs:

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Stardust

"Highest density"
1995-96 overseeded greens University of Arizona

"Highest percent ground cover"
University of Florida. 1995

"Highest mean ball speed scores"
1994-95 overseeded Bermuda greens--University of Arizona.

"Best monthly/seasonal turf color"
of all Poa trivs overseeded on tifway Bermuda--University of Fla. 1994-95.

"Highest seasonal average"
of all Poa trivs|--putting greens evaluation--
1997-98 Mississippi State University.

Cypress

"Highest mean for turf color"
1996-97 putting green overseeding trial, Clemson University.

"Highest quality rating"
of all entries in the 1996 Bermuda Triangle Research Center, Palm Springs, California.