At Braelinn, traffic cops need not apply

BY RANDY WAYNE WILSON

Golf car traffic control is a major headache for many superintendents, particularly when their course has a tendency to stay wet long after the rain has stopped.

Traditional methods to steer cars away from easily damaged wet areas involve ropes and stakes. But ropes and stakes suffer at the hands of both maintenance crew and golfers.

The unfortunate rope stakes are often run over by players, blamed for bad shots, and left strewn across the fairway. Maintenance workers often remove stakes in order to mow or spray and, lacking a hammer, have difficulty reinserting them in the original position. As a result stakes are sometimes disfigured and left leaning at crazy angles.

In this era of heightened course grooming standards, an unsightly, bent, rusty, non-uniform rope stake does not reflect well on the superintendent.

Mike Wilson, superintendent at Braelinn Golf Club in Peachtree City, Ga., has implemented an inexpensive, attractive method to solve the rope stake dilemma. After observing drainage patterns and trouble areas, Wilson sunk PVC sleeves in the designated state position.

He did this by driving in a steel pipe and replacing it with a 1 1/4 inch schedule 40 PVC sleeve 10 inches long, to just below ground level. Next, a painted length of 1-inch diameter PVC pipe with a tee glued on top, is inserted into the sleeve. The player or crew member can easily remove it, replacing it with a 1-1/4 inch masonry bit.

Wilson positions rounded cement traffic bumps in key places to vary the car patterns. The difference between these and others is that Wilson’s rope stakes, the traffic bumps are removable for trimming, traffic variation, or seasonal adjustment.

To construct these innovative little turf-savers, choose a plastic bowl with a shape that fits your design. Grease the bowl lightly before pouring cement. At approximately 15 minutes, insert a 6-inch spike roughly 1 to 1 1/2 inches into the mixture.

Wilson advises placing the spikes in salt water 24 hours beforehand, because the cement adheres more readily to a rusty appearance.

These low-profile measures will not solve all the problems a superintendent faces, but by turning a recurring problem, the efficiency-minded turf manager is free to concentrate on more pressing matters.

Wilson reports excellent results with a portable drill outfitted with a 5/16-inch disc and a plastic bowl to form the bump. A 1-1/4 inch depth.

Wilson recommends mixing a dye in the cement, rather than painting the surface. If the bump is chipped, it will still retain a uniform appearance.

Wilson prefers a dye offered by L.M. Schofield Co. called Chromix-Earth Red. The muted earth tones blend well with natural landscape.

After greasing the bowl (for easy removal), pour in dyed cement. At approximately 15 minutes, insert a 6-inch spike roughly 1 to 1 1/2 inches into the mixture.

Wilson advises placing the spikes in salt water 24 hours beforehand, because the cement adheres more readily to a rusty surface than a clean one.

At this point, select the area you need to discourage cars from entering or exiting the fairway and drill a hole in the cart path to a 4-inch depth.

Traffic bump spacing can be left to your design. Grease the bowl lightly before pouring cement.

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