Supers find mission possible with methyl bromide

By TERRY BUCHEN

The pioneering efforts of a team of agronomists in 1980 have led to discovery of a whole new world of inventive renovation practices. The team began at the University of Maryland and later expanded to include others who have totally renovated all 18 greens without going through a costly, time-consuming total re-do of each green. Butler National GC, Oak Brook, Ill., was suffering from Toronto C-15 Bacterial wilt infection. Facing the problem of renovating all 18 greens without going through a costly, time-consuming total re-do of each green, Butler decided to totally renovate the surface of each green using recommendations from the team of the Dutch, Edward W. Fischer, Robert M. Williams, Arthur W. Benson, Dr. John Wehner and officials of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. They decided:

1. Mow the greens many times, as closely as possible.
2. Aerate them twice with 5/8-inch tines, and decompose all plugs.
3. Have Hendrix & Dail, Inc. fumigate all greens with methyl bromide and cover them with a plastic tarp in 48 hours, the tarp was removed to let the soil breathe for 48 hours.
4. Strip the dead sod, leaving about one-quarter inch of thatch.
5. Top dress the surface heavily, filling the aerifier holes and providing a "cushion" effect mixing the thatch with the sand.
6. Seed with Pennine creeping bentgrass "foundation seed" at one-half pound pure seed in two different directions.
7. Apply a starter fertilizer.
9. Saturate the seed for 24 hours to swell the seed. Water about every two hours to keep the seed moist all times, thereafter.

Seedling began immediately after the Labor Day weekend. Germination occurred in three days, with the first mowing at one-quarter inch in 14 days. Temporary greens were phased in about two months before the renovation work and were in great shape by Labor Day. The new greens were opened on May 1, 1981, to rave reviews.

SUCCESS BREEDS SUCCESS

Other pioneering superintendents followed, successfully restoring their greens at minimal cost and downtime to rid the greens of the Toronto C-15 disease. Since the results were so good, a new variation of the renovation process evolved to rid older courses of poa annua. At Inverness Club in Toledo, Ohio, superintendant Thomas F. Walker said: "We did not want to totally rebuild our small, undulating greens."

"The members said it was definitely worth all of the time and effort involved."

—Mark Yoder

Two other superintendents who followed in the footsteps of the Walker method:

Oscar L. Miles and Edward L. Fischer, while at Meridian Hills GC, Indianapolis, Ind.

Douglas Peterson, while at Prairie Dunes CC, Hutchinson, Kan., and recently at Balti-more Country Club last September. The club had already approved a renovation process to the Five Farms Course's greens before Peterson was hired, so work could begin immediately.

Five Farms was designed by A.W. Tillinghast in 1926 and, like the other "Top 100" clubs, its members did not want to do a total rebuild of their greens. They wanted their original architectural greens contours kept intact.

Petersen recommended to the board of directors that with Prairie Dunes' set of agro-nomic circumstances, it was not necessary to remove the sand. After each extensive deep-aerifying, the plugs were removed and the holes were filled with straight sand. The final result was that the substructure was rebuilt without the time and expense of literally starting from scratch. Methyl bromide was applied. Then, during September 1989, the greens were overseeded with Pennlinks and opened for play April 1, 1990.

HARD WORK PAYS OFF

Petersen was then offered and accepted the golf course manager's position at Balti-more Country Club last September. The club had already approved a renovation process to the Five Farms Course's greens before Peterson was hired, so work could begin immediately.

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