Inform uninform of winter chores

By GLENN PETERS

In the years that I have worked as a golf course equipment technician, people always ask me: "What do you do all winter?" This is the question I am asked most frequently, both by people who play the game and those who seem to think that there couldn't be very much to do once the temperature drops and the snow flies.

What follows is a brief synopsis of what happens at the Sunset Ridge Country Club maintenance facility during the winter months.

First and foremost, I prioritize what equipment will be worked on and in what order. Once this is done, the work begins with a visual inspection of each machine for obvious problems and, then, a thorough pressure washing is done. Hoods, fenders and body panels are removed to clear any accumulation of grass and dirt.

The most important aspect of our maintenance program, which affects both course playability and condition, is the sharpening of the cutting units. All cutting units, from greens to rough, are sharpened during winter maintenance. Oil changes, lubrication, tune-ups and overhauls are performed at this time as well. As the maintenance on each piece of equipment is completed, it is inspected again and then waxed. Waxing of turf equip-

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MECHANICS' CORNER

Dr. Milt Engelke

Golf Course News: Could you review your recent work with new strains of creeping bentgrass, both those that have been released and those we can expect to see in the future?

Milt Engelke: The Texas A&M bentgrass breeding program was initiated in 1985 with support from the United States Golf Association and Bentgrass Research, Inc. (Fort Worth), with the primary emphasis of targeting physiological mechanisms of heat tolerance and superior disease resistance within creeping bentgrasses.

Management practices center on the lack of heat tolerance, which is partly due to the lack of root persistence during stress periods. The root is obviously im-

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Dr. Milt Engelke is project manager of the Turfgrass Breeding, Genetics and Management Program at Texas A&M University, where his major emphasis is developing turfgrass for the arid and semi-arid regions of the South and Southwest. He released Prairie buffalo grass in 1979 (the first turf-type buffalo grass), three strains of creeping bentgrass (Cato, Crenshaw and Mariner) and four strains of zoysagrass (Palisades, Crowne, Cavalier and Diamond). Engelke earned his PhD in plant breeding from the University of Wisconsin/Madison in 1974 and received the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Distinguished Service Award in 1994.

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portant for maintaining an effective transpirational cooling system within the plant. Plants with strong roots are more competitive during stress periods and require less irrigation. Minimizing irrigation reduces disease incidence. Texas A&M's Dr. Phil Colbaugh is also identifying sources of resistance to pythium, rhizoctonia and dollar spot resistance.

Cato and Crenshaw creeping bentgrasses were the initial releases (1993) from the joint USGA/Bentgrass Research, Inc./Texas A&M program. The disease tolerance in both is more indirect. Left unchecked, they can be severely damaged. Fortunately, disease development is considerably slowed, allowing for a more pro-active rather than reactive management approach. Cato appears highly tolerant of dollar spot whereas Crenshaw appears susceptible to the problem.

Mariner creeping bentgrass was recently released (1996) and licensed to Pick Seed West. It is recognized for its superior salt tolerance. Mariner is a direct reselection from Seaside with substantial improvements in turf quality, heat tolerance and general overall performance and the salt tolerance of Seaside. Future releases will target improvements in disease resistance while maintaining a concerted effort in physiological stress tolerance and turf-quality improvements. The Syn92 series features direct and indirect high temperature tolerance, turfgrass quality, mowability, density of stand and persistence as well as resistance to Pythium and Rhizoctonia. Future varieties will include Imperial and Century from E.F. Burlingham, and Backspin by TMI/Scotts. The Syn96 series is in the field and under initial seed increase. New varieties are being developed specifically for dollar spot resistance, with continued improvements in growth, texture and genetic color.

Many managers had little choice when selecting grasses. The real question is how many different varieties can the market bear for a given species? How many bentgrasses are needed? One certainly wasn't enough. Are 30 too many? Probably, especially considering the size of the market. But the free enterprise system will likely reduce that number in the near future.

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The goal of this maintenance is increased longevity of the equipment, improved production and decreased downtime during the season. Although this maintenance program does not sound time-consuming, it is. It takes me and four other men helping to complete the work in time for the upcoming golf season. So, as the 1996 golf season approaches, the membership at Sunset Ridge Country Club can be sure that the maintenance facility will be ready, even if the weather isn’t.

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MALOY JOINS GREEN SECTION MID-CONTINENT REGION

Brian Maloy, the construction superintendent during a recent renovation of Great Southwest Golf Course in Grand Prairie, Texas, has joined the U.S. Golf Association Green Section as an agronomist. He will work with Mid-Continent Region Director Paul Vermeulen, who left an agronomist’s post in the Western Region to succeed Jim Moore. Moore is director of the newly created Construction Education Program. A superintendent for 10 years, Maloy worked at Indian Creek Golf Course in Carillon, Texas, and Oakridge Country Club in Garland, Texas. He holds bachelor’s degrees in agronomy and horticulture from Iowa State University.

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 состоится. В рамках программы "Уроки агрономии" будет обеспечена образовательная активность в области гольфа.

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One problem is, we don’t re-tire old varieties. We just add more. Competition is healthy and ultimately provides greater choices for the consumer as long as the consumer is properly informed.

The USGA initiated Green Section Research in 1982 and began intensely funding breeding programs. With the exception of Ponta State, little effort had been made in golf turf development. Efforts by the University of Arizona, University of Rhode Island and Washington State University yielded improved bentgrasses — SR1020, Providence and Putters, respectively. Most of the breeding effort in creeping bentgrass was an aside to the primary mission of their programs and consequently very little support was available for timely or rapid advancement.

GCN: Where can we expect to see the greatest advances in turfgrass research in the next 10 to 20 years?

ME: Biotechnology will play an even more important role in the development and advancement of new turfgrasses, although it will be somewhat hampered in the short term due to restrictions on the exchange of genes and germplasm resources. In the long term, we will be able to transfer desirable genes across plant species to accelerate the development process. The turf industry will likely face many challenges due to the self-interest of selected user groups. We have already seen major efforts to restrict turf use in many Southern cities because of the perception turf consumes too much water. Educational efforts are needed to promote turf as the "glue" that unites the environment and helps keep it intact.

GCN: Do the golf-related associations do a good job of allocating their research dollars?

ME: The USGA, GCSAA and similar organizations have funded research for decades, mostly in small grants to numerous individuals and institutions. Unfortunately, most of these dollars were only supplemental or generally of a minor nature, meaning a significant piece of research was seldom accomplished. With the advent of the USGA Green Section research effort, the number of grants were significantly reduced. However, the level of funding substantially increased, enabling serious research efforts be put forth in fewer but significant areas.

The initial emphasis targeted breeding (which requires a long-term effort with significant funding) along with understanding the physiological development and performance of grasses under stress conditions. The shift in attitude enabled the industry to substantially improve varieties and management strategies because funding was consolidated into significant and continually accountable grants.

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