Mini-dwarf Bermudas may end debate over bent

BY MARK LESLIE

WESLACO, Texas — If the bentgrass experiment isn’t over already in the deep South, some new mini-dwarf Bermudagrasses may be ending the debate themselves. Course architect Jeffrey Brauer of GolfScapes, whose new Tierra Santa golf club here sports Champions Bermudagrass, sings the praises of this “mini-dwarf” variety.

"Champions," he said, "looks very promising. It has shorter nodes, so it can cut even shorter than Tifdwarf — almost down to 1/10th inch. That allows it to begin to approximate the putting qualities of bentgrass. It stands straight up and is very fine-bladed.

"Champions promises the environmentally friendly aspects of Bermuda, but with a better putting quality."

Saying he sees "a trend here in Texas of replacing bentgrass greens with Bermudagrass," Brauer said several courses in the Dallas area have converted.

"It [trend] is something I fully support," said Dale Miller, director of maintenance at Barton Creek Club & Confer ence Center in Austin, the first facility in the region to convert its greens to Champions. "This grass opens a lot of doors, makes life a little easier environmentally, and still provides great conditions."

Bentgrass is the universally preferred putting surface, but as a cool-season turf it often dies in this hot region. Miller found himself using several temporary greens for two or three months a year, "which is unacceptable" at his two courses — one private, one resort.

Since converting the Fazio course at the 36-hole Barton Creek last year, Miller said he has "talked to 30 to 40 supers, GMs and greens chairmen from Georgia and Florida throughout the South to Palm Springs [California] about what you have to do, timing, all kinds of issues dealing with conversion."