Recouning primo conditioning & healthy turf: Two takes

**Raised heights to 3/16? Ball roll needn't suffer**

By Pat Gross

You've heeded the warnings and raised your putting green cutting height to 3/16 of an inch, just like all the experts have told you. Just when you're proud and confident of your accomplishments, the golfers start complaining that the greens are too slow. "Cut 'em lower" they cry. "Turn off the water!"

"They need more verticutting!" and the ever-popular: "I don't care what you do, but make sure they better be rolling 10 feet for the big tournament!"

Don't they remember all the disease and turf loss that occurred when you tried to keep them fast all summer?

Mowing at 3/16 is a prudent practice for creeping bentgrass/Poa annua greens during the summer. There is no doubt the increased mowing height improves turfgrass stress tolerance during the summer and, yes, the greens are going to be a little slower. Instead of caving in to demands for lowering the mowing height, there are several things you can do to improve ball roll and keep the turf healthy at 3/16.

1. Keep'em sharp — Greens suffer just as much from a poor quality cut as they do from an excessively low mowing height. Your mechanic should check the cutting units daily when they come in from mowing, and make any necessary adjustments. Weekly or biweekly backlapping along with checking the bedknife will help keep the cutting units sharp at all times.

2. Proper Irrigation — Irrigation management is far and away the most important practice for maintaining healthy turf at any cutting height. With creeping bentgrass/Poa annua greens, the goal is to keep the soil uniformly moist, but not wet. If you are on a leaching program to control salinity, go ahead and give the greens a good long soaking when necessary (4 to 6 hours). Then turn off the automatic system and go to hand watering for as long as possible. Overly wet greens are slow, bumpy and disease prone.

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**The perfect shot shouldn't mean the perfect lie**

By Denis Griffiths

Years ago, when the links courses of Scotland and England were laid out in and around the natural dunes and sand forms, man moved minimal earth to provide contiguous golf holes. Everything on the links was adapted to fit existing conditions. You might say that Mother Nature was actually the builder, and the course designer was merely the one who discovered routing.

This use of nature often provided courses that were testing and frequently offered imperfect lies, blind shots and unmanicured turf. Part of the enjoyment of these courses, however, resided in having to respond to these challenging circumstances, often through creative shotmaking.

But somewhere along the line, the American perception of the game strayed from its European roots. That perception continues to this day.

Denis Griffiths is principal of the golf course design firm, Denis Griffiths & Associates, Inc. of Braselton, Ga. He is sitting president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects.

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