Bluegrass on comeback trail, turf breeders say

By MARK LESLIE

BELTSVILLE, Md. — Bluegrass, out of fashion since perennial ryegrasses broke onto the scene, may be on the road to a comeback in golf course circles. Turfgrass breeders are conquering the obstacles of lowered height of cut and density, and are hoping to improve seed yield and heat tolerance.

"We opened the door for closecut bluegrasses," said Dr. Doug Brede, research director at Jacklin Seed Co. "In fact, I think we've started a whole phenomena... It opens up a totally new possibility."

Turf breeders say back in golf course circles. Turfgrass ryegrasses broke onto the fairway almost exclusively, partially because there were not a lot of options," said Kevin Morris, national director of the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP), headquartered here. "They worked pretty well except that summer patch and necrotic ring spot started to become a problem and we had no control for them. When the perennial ryes came along, and were easy to seed and looked nice, people started to use them exclusively. But, since then, we've found that rye is not perfect, either."

"You can blow out a lot of ryegrass with winter kill," said Dave Oatis, director of the U.S. Golf Association's Research Section. "Now, there are better options for closecut." Ryegrasses also suffer from poor divot recovery, attacks of snow mold, brown patch and red thread. And now gray leaf spot has emerged as a devastating problem.

Buffalograsses breeders hoping for super changes in attitude

By MARK LESLIE

PHOENIX, Ariz. — Hailed a few years ago as a solution to water restrictions and chemical applications, buffalograss has instead drawn more attraction as an alternative. Buffalograss for the next century," said Dr. Terry Riordan of the University of Nebraska, a key breeder of buffaloes. "We're only in our 12th year, but the new varieties we have are much better than we've had in the past."

"We've opened the door for closecut bluegrasses," said Dr. Doug Brede, research director at Jacklin Seed Co. "In fact, I think we've started a whole phenomena... It opens up a totally different option for people. On a scale of 10, PD give it an 8 on an order of earth-shattering if I were a superintendent."

"Where superintendents have had the difficult choice of a ryegrass or bluegrass which does not have the ability to spread and repair divots, or bermegrasses with much higher maintenance costs, bluegrasses will become a more much considered choice," said Dr. Virginia Lehman, director of research at the Loft's Seed Co., research farm in Lebanon, Ore. "People used to use Kentucky bluegrass on fairways almost exclusively, partially because there were not a lot of options," said Kevin Morris, national director of the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP), headquartered here. "They worked pretty well except that summer patch and necrotic ring spot started to become a problem and we had no control for them. When the perennial ryes came along, and were easy to seed and looked nice, people started to use them exclusively. But, since then, we've found that rye is not perfect, either."

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