

Paspalum's popularity surging as an alternative turfgrass

By JOEL JOYNER

SINGAPORE — In a new development for golf courses, the warm-season turfgrass paspalum is rapidly gaining ground throughout Asia and the rest of the world as a strong alternative to Bermudagrass. International Management Group (IMG), located here, is "completely sold that this is the best new grass available," said Steve Shepherdson, design associate for the golf course architectural firm.

Paspalum is pegged to be one of the most useful warm season turfgrasses for the 21st century, with its high tolerance for poor quality water and minimal requirements for fertilizers and herbicides.



"We've used Salam Seashore Paspalum on our last eight projects in Asia," said Shepherdson. "We've yet to experience any negatives on this grass. We haven't had the opportunity to use it on putting surfaces yet, but that's only because it has been difficult to convince some developers that it will work as well as Tifdwarf."

The grass is described as having a darker-green color compared to the popular 419 Bermudagrass. "Paspalum also has a faster grow-in rate with proper maintenance, and divots from play fill in quicker," he said. "Recovery is important, especially during the monsoon and typhoon seasons."

"It also provides a denser, tighter playing surface than any other warm season turfgrass," Shepherdson added. "We just had a grand opening at the Shenzhen Airport Golf Club with Ian Woosnam, and

he was amazed. He had just played in the Hong Kong Open and commented that he had been hitting nothing but fliers for days, but then here he started hitting balls with his old flight pattern off the Salam."

AGGRESSIVE GROWTH

One of the only drawbacks noticed by Shepherdson is paspalum's aggressiveness. If not properly maintained around the Tifdwarf greens, it will encroach and take over.

The aggressive turf is also undergoing some aggressive research. After 24 years of breeding grasses for super-stressed environments, Ronny Duncan, Ph.D., at the University of Georgia, recognizes the potential for paspalum.

"We've expanded our own research now where we're looking to use it in land reclamation areas for bio-remediation and cleaning up environments contaminated by heavy metals," he said. "We're even working with a nuclear power plant in South Carolina to see about helping to clean up areas with nuclear waste."

"It's a very environmentally friendly grass that will take alternative water and about half the fertilizer and water needed for Bermudagrass, if managed right," Duncan added. "For wetlands and other sensitive areas, I think it will prove an ideal turfgrass. That's why a lot of architects are seriously looking at it now, especially for golf courses where they'll have to irrigate with brackish, salt or effluent water."

Stephen Alexander, superintendent at Mission Hills Golf Club, Guanlan, China, agrees about the aggressiveness of paspalum. "We put it on at Sand River

Continued on page 20

Mederios takes paspalum conversion into his own hands on Kauai

By ANDREW OVERBECK

KOLOA, Hawaii — Many courses, particularly those in island locations, are beginning to turn to Seashore paspalum due to its salt tolerance and reduced water requirements. Not many superintendents, however, have undertaken a bold conversion program like the one underway here at Kiahuna Golf Club on the island of Kauai.

Superintendent Robert Mederios, who has worked at Kiahuna for the past 14 years, is in the midst of gradually converting his fairways from common Bermudagrass to Seashore paspalum, using turf that he discovered around an irrigation lake as his source.

"The paspalum was planted along a lake to prevent erosion," said Mederios. "During the summertime we noticed that it held up through all types of weather and stayed green, so we decided to put it on the fairways."

According to Mederios, the paspalum has been certified by both the United States Golf Association and University of Georgia paspalum specialist Ronny Duncan, Ph.D.

With only 10 full-timers on staff, Mederios has implemented a gradual

conversion process in order to keep all 18 holes in play during the busy part of the year. Most of the work takes place during the slow season between March and September.

"We use Roundup and take one-third of the fairway and knock it out from tee to green," said Mederios. "Then we till up the soil and throw stolons down and put in a temporary irrigation line above ground to water it four times a day."

In three and a half months, the new paspalum is ready for play. Currently, almost all the fairways on the course are one-third paspalum and three are 75 percent done.

When the paspalum portion of the fairway matures, Mederios uses it as the nursery for the next group of fairways. "We pump it up with fertilizer and thin it out and take it over and plant it," he said. "It saves us time and money."

"The more we put out there the more it spreads on its own and the better the fairways look," Mederios said. "It is even taking over in some places."

The golfers, said Mederios, have never been happier. "They would

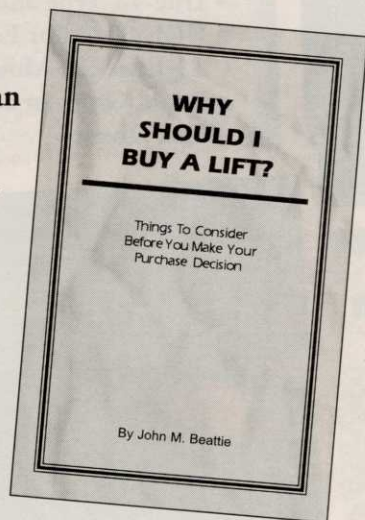
Continued on page 20



The 11th hole at the Kiahuna Golf Club is being converted to Seashore paspalum. The left side of the fairway is common Bermudagrass, the center is four-week-old Seashore paspalum with a temporary irrigation line, and the right side is Seashore paspalum that was planted last March.

WHY BUY A LIFT?

Lifts are getting more attention than ever before, but it can still seem confusing. Now you can learn the reasons why a lift is important to your maintenance shop and evaluate the issues that must be considered when selecting one to meet your equipment needs.



Request your FREE copy of this informative booklet. Call 800-426-3634.

www.trionlifts.com

GCSAA BOOTH #1905

Effective Environmentally Sound Nematode Control

It is true! **NEO-TEC** is NOT like many other nematocides, which are extremely toxic.

NEO-TEC IS:

- ✓ naturally derived
- ✓ EPA Registered
- ✓ environmentally friendly
- ✓ harmless to beneficial nematodes
- ✓ completely biodegradable

NEO-TEC features:

- ✓ easy container disposal
- ✓ minimal PPE
- ✓ minimal Re-Entry Interval

Don't be fooled by non-registered products.

Nematodes hate it . . . so does the competition.

Parkway Research Corporation
For Ecology and Environment
Telephone 800.442.9821
Facsimile 281.590.3353
info@parkwayresearch.com



GCSAA BOOTH #2112

EWING
Irrigation & Golf & Industrial

Turf experts for all your irrigation needs since 1922

FEATURING:

- Hunter Golf Seed
- Fertilizers
- Fountains
- Drainage pipes and fittings
- Irrigation equipment and supplies
- Erosion control

1.800.343.9464
www.ewing1.com

GCSAA BOOTH #5323

Paspalum surging

Continued from page 15

Golf Club in Shenzhen, China, and it does present an encroachment problem," he said. "We went with 419 Bermudagrass on the tees, but the paspalum took over. We were dropping fertilizer rates by one third, but it is a

vigorous plant. It needs food. The lower you seem to mow it, the better it looks though.

"If there is a downside to paspalum it is that it's prone to pythium diseases, even in the roughs," Alexander said. "However, at Sand River we watered it with straight salt water and it loved it. We had a fewer disease problems, and I think it was because of the salt water."

EVERYWHERE BUT ON THE GREENS

Jeff Hood, superintendent at the new Ocean Club on Paradise Island, Nassau, Bahamas, maintains paspalum on everything – fairways, tees, and roughs – except the greens, where Tifeagle is used. "I'd be real guarded about saying you could use straight salt water," he said, "because we've definitely seen some negative impact."

The environment has presented some challenges for the new course and the turfgrass. "With straight salt water, the sprigs were slow to come together during the grow-in," said Hood. "There was also some bad discoloration with the recently laid sod."

The course does have a freshwater lake that is used to irrigate the greens. "We've had some salt

water intrusions as bad as 30,000 parts per million," he said. "To water the paspalum, we've had to blend the salt water with enough fresh water to get the concentrations down to about 7,000 parts per million. It definitely requires some unique

It's a vigorous plant. It needs food. The lower you seem to mow it, the better it looks'

— Stephen Alexander

management habits.

"We knew that the water quality here was so poor that 419 just wasn't a good alternative, but the paspalum has worked extremely well. For instance, we haven't applied a herbicide. The salt water mixture and the aggressiveness of the grass tends to choke any weeds."

At the University of Georgia, Duncan said that management scenarios for paspalum are now available and linked to the www.georgiaturf.com website. "We currently have about five or six cultivars where you can apply straight ocean water," said Duncan. "Do we recommend it? No. But if ocean water is all you have available, then you need to have the proper management to keep the salts moving, or you'll eventually have problems." ■

Mederios

Continued from page 15

rather hit on the paspalum because it looks nice and the ball sits up well," he said.

Agronomically, the paspalum has also performed well. "It is a more friendly turfgrass," said Mederios. "You don't need as much herbicide because it chokes out weeds well. It also requires less fertilizer and water. It is really a no-brainer – and to think people thought it was a weed."

So far, Mederios has noted a 50-percent reduction in the amount of fertilizer and water used and has yet to apply any herbicides.

While he expects the conversion to take another three years to complete, he is already setting his sites on converting the greens to paspalum as well.

"I have a nursery green and practice chipping green in paspalum already," Mederios said. "The golfers are already playing on it and I am learning how to maintain it properly. I fertilize them every three months and verticut them once a week and I can get the same speed that I get from the Bermudagrass." ■



© 2000 Flowtronex PSI, Inc.

Turn to the original - Flowtronex. We engineer, build, and pre-test our pump stations under one roof so you're sure to get a flawless product. Through our Service Network, we offer repair, replacement and upgrades as well as new station consultations. For a pumping system that's crafted with extraordinary skill, call Flowtronex today. We'll create a pump station that you'll call a work of art. See us at the GCSAA show (booth # 3633).

FLOWTRONEX™

No One Makes Your Life Easier. No One.

1-800-786-7480 • www.flowtronex.com

*Some restrictions apply

Visit www.flowtronex.com/freemovie.htm for a Free Movie Rental* Good at

GCSAA BOOTH #3633

BLOCKBUSTER