Editorial Focus: Putting Green Management

Nikolai: Green contour, not speed, matters most

LANSING, Mich. — In the course of researching his upcoming book on green speed and helping Crystal Downs Country Club superintendent Mike Morris identify his course's optimum green speed, Michigan State University turfgrass research specialist Thom Nikolai may have found the answer to end the constant debate over green speed.

"When the USGA perfected the Stimpmeter in the late 1970s they set up a chart for tournament play and named [the readings] fast, medium and slow," said Nikolai. "They should not have done that, because no one is going to say 'I want to play on the slow ones.' Whenever a golfer hears the speed they say they want to play something that fast. It is synonymous with wanting a faster car."

Instead, Nikolai argues, the chart should be changed from describing speed to describing the contour of the green. This would replace fast, medium and slow with flat, undulating and severely contoured.

"It would be better for all golfers on each individual course, it would be better for superintendents and it would be better for the turf," said Nikolai. "You can tell people that speeds are different from course to course, but people are not very good at communicating why speeds are different. It comes down to contours.

"What needs to be done is to find and evaluate the correct green speed for each particular course and that can be done very simply with the superintendent identifying a range by surveying members," he added. "This could be done over the course of a year. And the results would be a determined green speed range that is the best speed for each particular course."

> *'I think golfers would rather play on contoured greens as opposed to flat greens.'*
> *— Thom Nikolai*

Although more research is necessary, Nikolai hopes to develop a model that takes into account the topography of the green, making the fastest possible numbers less appealing.

"I think the majority of golfers would rather play on contoured greens as opposed to flat greens, thus fastest should not be perceived as the best to play on," he said.■

Divot sand filler

Continued from page 8

mounted to a shelving unit and secured at the top for stability.

The following parts are needed to construct the tube filler:

- 1 piece of eight inch PVC Pipe, four to five feet long
- 1 eight inch by two inch PVC reducer
- 1 two inch by one inch FPT bushing
- 1 one inch threaded nipple
- 1 one inch brass ball valve
- 1 eight inch glue end cap (optional)

To assemble the unit, thread the nipple into the ball valve, then thread the nipple into the bushing. Then glue the bushing into the reducer, and attach it to the eight-inch pipe. The opposite end of the pipe is used to pour the divot mix into the device. You can, however, grind the outside diameter of the pipe so an eight-inch cap will fit over the pipe if needed.

— Kevin J. Ross, CGCS, superintendent Country Club of the Rockies, Edwards, Colo.

•••

Got a SUPERidea of your own? Email your ideas to editor Andrew Overbeck at aoverbeck@golfcoursenews.com. If your idea is selected for publication, we'll send you a *Golf Course News* golf shirt.■