Continued from page 61

pressed with the company and its products, and he was convinced that Floratine should be involved in the Riviera green restoration.

So he called Bill Byrnes, Floratine’s president, and asked him to assess Riviera’s greens to see if his products could help. Byrnes says targeted treatment of damaged turf requires more than just an over-the-phone description of the problem.

“Prescription without diagnosis is malpractice, and that applies to turf companies as well as to doctors,” Byrnes says. “Despite what we’re all striving for, there’s no silver bullet. You have to get down on the ground to find out exactly what the grass needs before you start suggesting chemical solutions.”

Ramina took soil and plant-tissue samples and had them analyzed by an independent laboratory. The results weren’t good.

“A residual thatch layer prevented nutrients from getting through to the soil, and the greens weren’t feeding as well as they needed,” Byrnes says. “Good grass was hard to grow under those conditions.”

The test results showed that the turf lacked sufficient potassium, phosphorus and nitrogen and calcium.

The solution

Byrne’s first recommendation was to use a foliar biostimulant called Astron, which provides grass with immediate nutritional needs. It also contains slow-release nutrients that penetrate plant leaves to feed them over a longer period of time.

“We’re looking for long-term solutions, not just quick fixes,” Byrnes says. “You want to feed the turf immediately, but you also want to provide for it over time.”

Ramina also used Floratine’s Knife product, a fortified iron supplement for quick, long-lasting greening of all grasses; and CalpHlex, a calcium supplement for nutrient balancing, salt reduction and pH management.

Ramina saw improvement within 24 hours of the first foliar application and soil conditions improved almost immediately.

Riviera’s maintenance crew also began an aggressive aeration program that broke up the thatch layer. Ramina also noticed the turf recovered from injury more quickly.

But the true test of the program was how the pros reacted to the greens.

“The players had nothing but good things to say about the greens at the Nissan Open in February — a complete reversal since the 1995 PGA Championship, when everyone complained about the greens,” Ramina says.

Ramina and Byrnes continue to work together to keep the greens in top condition.

“We know that not everyone has the budget for Paul (Ramina) has, so we’re willing to work with all superintendents to find a plan that will fit within their budgets,” Byrnes says.