

The Need For Speed – Effects of Cultural Practices and Ball Roll on Putting Greens

Thom Nikolai and Doug Karcher
Department of Crop and Soil Sciences

Eddie Stimpson introduced the Stimp meter in 1937. The intended use was to provide uniformity in speed from green to green on individual golf courses. Mr. Stimpson states in his article, *Introducing the Stimp*, “To the greenskeeper who is harassed by two groups of members, half of whom want the greens faster and half of whom want them slower, it would be of some comfort to know that he was maintaining the standard conditions as measured by the Stimp Meter and was determined by the USGA”. Fast forward to the 70’s when improved technology allowed for thinner manufacturing of bedknives and the USGA gave a Stimp Meter to each of its member clubs. Golfers increased their demands for faster green speeds and began expect uniformity of green speed from golf course to golf course. This unrealistic demand expedited the tighter mowing heights and increased the stress on the golf course superintendent and his/her putting turf.

The authors of this paper thought it might be interesting, and possibly of some use to the superintendent, to determine if a green speed difference of one foot is truly relative and detectable at today’s tighter mowing heights. Surely a golfer can determine the difference in green speed between a green that Stimps 6’ and one that Stimps at 7’. However, is there a detectable difference in green speed between a green that Stimps at 9’ and one that Stimps at 10’?

Data will be collected and the results reported in this interactive Field Day stop. In closing the author’s would like to quote the editor of *Golfdom: the Business Journal of Golf*, which published the 1937 article “*Introducing the Stimp*”. He wrote of the Stimp Meter, “As for its use in actual play, we have the definite idea that it’s out, not only because of the mechanical phase but because the player actually couldn’t make enough use of what he has learned about green speed to warrant use of the device. However, there may be something to the device as an instrument for greenkeepers who might want to answer arguments about the speed and uniformity of their greens”. The editor then closed with the following insightful comment, “We toss Stimpson’s interesting contribution into the lists for the arguments it will provide”. Thanks!