

You're Only As Good As Your Greens - Were Yesterday

By Bob Costa

One of the First things every successful Golf Course Superintendent learns in the importance of maintaining quality putting surfaces. Golfers expect it and, in many cases demand it. Superintendents try their very best to deliver it, sometimes meeting golfers' expectations and sometimes falling short. For the novice, it may appear that greens maintenance is merely a process of mowing the grass short with a special mower. For the Golf Course Superintendent, it's much more complex and poses the greatest agronomic challenge.

What makes putting green maintenance so difficult, and why is there such variability in greens conditioning from season to season and course to course? First and foremost, it much be recognized that putting greens are comprised of grass plants. Like all living things, their health is influenced by variables such as foot traffic, temperature, moisture and pests. Keep in mind that mowing to heights of less than 3/16ths of an inch limits root system development and places the plants under considerable stress. A superintendent's ability to minimize the negative influence of these variables generally translates into quality putting surfaces that are smooth and roll true.


Other factors, such as the size and contour of a green, play in important role in greens management, as does turf variety. Many Golf Course Superintendents are asked to manage greens that are

undersized, constructed on poorly drained native soils, while maintaining cutting heights that allow for a very narrow margin of error. The end result is greens that can be inconsistent and varying in quality based upon the management of the many factors affecting plant health.

The most important component of successful putting green management is drainage. If you have it, many potential problems can be avoided. Well drained soils produce smoother, firmer putting surfaces that are less likely to compact, easier to leach salts and tend to support less disease.

In addition, roots growing in aerated soils tend to be healthier, thereby reducing plant stress. Hence, the advent of the sand-based putting green.

It is a challenge superintendents understand and accept, yet I'm sure that there are times when they wish it was just as simple as a special grass, mowed with a special mower.

When a Golf Course Superintendent meets the challenge, the reward is to hear a golfer say, "These greens are the best that I have played in months." 

65 Year Celebration Program Set



The GCSANC 65 Year Anniversary celebration continues to take shape as a result of a recent planning meeting conducted at Fort Ord. The 65 year commemorative event, scheduled for

Monday, August 11th will recognize the history and past accomplishments of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of Northern California. Host Superintendent, Leonard Theis and Tournament Coordinator, Amy Baker have put together an attractive tournament package that will make this special event the best value of '97.

This morning program will feature a photo and equipment display, past president recognition and a roundtable discussion featuring Dr. Jim Watson, who will entertain the audience with a discussion on the history of equipment used in turf maintenance.

A BBQ lunch and golf will follow on Fort Ord's demanding Bayonet Course. Included in the tournament format will be a special past president's flight. Make plans now to join in the celebration of GCSANC's proud past.



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