



Poa Prose

By Mike McCullough

According to the Father of Annual Bluegrass, Dr. Joe Vargas, *Poa annua* has gotten a bad rap.

It is no secret that *Poa annua* has had a less than spectacular track record. The knocks on *Poa* have been that it is not heat tolerant, not cold tolerant, and produces too many seed heads. However, many of its positive characteristics seldom get the recognition that is due. Increased shade tolerance, ability to recover after a major stress event, and faster response from fertilizer inputs are benefits rarely mentioned when the topic of *Poa annua* comes up.

Vargas argues that *Poa annua* does not die due to heat. *Poa* dies because of diseases. He cited examples of healthy *Poa* stands during the middle of the summer in Atlanta, Georgia. Locally, *Poa* is routinely found in greens that have summer

temperatures well into triple digits, i.e. Redding, Sacramento, Stockton, Visalia, etc. When conditions exist for disease development and preventative fungicides have been applied, *Poa annua* can survive adverse environmental conditions.

It is well documented that *Poa annua* has more tillers per inch than the other commonly used plant material for putting surfaces. Researchers have also reported that the photosynthetic rates of *Poa annua* have been 40 % higher when compared to the "industry standards" for putting greens.

Dr. Vargas pointed out several cultural practices that favor annual bluegrass. A deep vertical mowing is beneficial once the spring flush of growth has started. The juvenile tissue that is formed handles the upcoming summer stresses better than older, mature tissue. Aerification should also occur during the initial green up period and during the peak production of seed heads.

A new cultivar of annual bluegrass is now available. Peterson's Creeping Annual Bluegrass was released from the extensive work of Dr. Don White from the University of Minnesota. Some of the published attributes are a stoloniferous growth habit, very dense and erect growth habit, and toleration of low mowing heights. Several courses have nurseries of the new variety, but I'm not currently aware of any courses that have it exclusively as a putting surface.

Poa annua is one of the most sensitive turfgrass species to soil salinity. Golf courses that use effluent water and have *Poa annua* greens are in for a challenge. Weekly monitoring of salinity during the dry season is an essential part of any management plan. Leaching with potable water or applying extra amounts of effluent will aid in pushing the salts through the root zone. Core aerification and deep-tine aerification helps when leaching salts from

pushup greens.

One of Dr. Vargas's best lines in defense of the second class turf species is: "Remember, the next time your lousy annual bluegrass turf dies, ask yourself, what also happened to the wonderful creeping bentgrass originally established on the green?"

Irrigation or Irritation (Cont'd)

information elsewhere. Normally, the "elsewhere" is on-the-job training that requires many hours on the business end of a shovel or elbow deep in a muddy hole trying to fix a broken head or line.

As the summer winds down and the rainy season gradually gets a little closer, the yearly irritation of poor irrigation will be a distant memory. Of course, that is until it flares back up the next year.

Fix It! – For The Good of the Game

Most golf course superintendents and golfers would agree that the number one golf course maintenance issue is un-repaired ball marks. It's a problem that has particularly frustrated superintendents for years and will likely continue to do so unless the habits of golfers can be altered.

There are several theories that attempt to explain why golfers are reluctant to repair ball marks. Regardless of what theory you may aspire to, education undoubtedly will play a key role changing golfer behavior.

Recognizing the importance of education and the need to increase golfer awareness the

GCSANC is sponsoring Ball Mark Repair Week beginning on October 2nd. The week will feature a series of press releases, interviews and climax with the distribution of 10,000 ball mark repair tools at the Transamerica Golf Tournament at Silverado Resort. In addition, all GCSANC Class A and B will be receiving two ball mark repair posters for display at their respective clubs.

The Ball Mark Repair Week concept was developed as a vehicle to educate golfers on the importance of repairing ball marks and to gain exposure for GCSANC Superintendents" said Bob Costa who serves as the GCSANC Media Director. "The distribution of the repair

tools, which will bear the GCSANC logo, serves this dual purpose. The posters, which demonstrate the proper way to repair a ball mark should be available to GCSANC Superintendents by late September, I strongly encourage all of our superintendent members to support the program and place the posters in highly accessible areas".

In addition to passing out repair tools at the Transamerica, GCSANC members will be distributing other promotional materials at a booth located at the golfers village on October 6th 7th and 8th.

Ball Mark Repair Posters Arriving Soon

GCSANC member superintendents take notice! By late September each member superintendent will receive (2) ball mark repair posters bearing the GCSANC logo. Superintendents are asked to display the posters in a prominent location to coincide with Ball Mark Repair Week, which begins on Monday, October 2nd.

"Our ability to convey our message to the golfing public regarding the importance of repairing ball marks rests in the hands of our member superintendents said GCSANC President" Gary Carls. I urge everyone to actively participate and help make this week success.