USGA CASE STUDY

Best Management Practices Resource Management

Regrassing Greens to Creeping Bentgrass

Shaker Ridge Country Club Mr. James Seaman, superintendent Loudonville, N.Y.

The Problem

Shaker Ridge Country Club is an 18-hole golf facility located near Albany, New York. The golf course was designed in 1929 by James Thompson and receives approximately 28,000 rounds of golf annually. The size of the original push-up-style, soil greens averages approximately 4,500 square feet. The greens had been modified with sand down to a 3- to 4-inch depth and drainage had been installed in several of the greens. The putting green turf was predominately annual bluegrass and older varieties of creeping bentgrass. The annual bluegrass on the greens became less dependable in summer due to historically high populations of stunt nematodes. Also, the annual bluegrass greens were susceptible to cold-temperature injury and, even though increased resources like fertilizer and water were used, the surfaces did not meet golfer expectations on a consistent basis.

The Solution

Despite intensive efforts to work with the older annual bluegrass greens, a more aggressive approach was necessary to replace the poor-performing putting surfaces. A proposal was put forth to remove sod from the putting greens, fumigate the putting green soils and regrass with a newer cultivar of creeping bentgrass.

Implementation of the ambitious plan required strong communication utilizing newsletters, email and ultimately a membership meeting with a USGA agronomist. The membership unanimously voted to proceed with the regrassing project. The option that was implemented was deemed the least disruptive to play and had the lowest financial impact possible. Refinancing the course's debt made it possible to finance the project. The regrassing project was planned for the off-peak season and play disruption was minimized by developing excellent-quality temporary greens. The golf professional also made arrangements for members to play at several other local golf courses while the project was underway. The work began in September 2012 and the greens reopened to play in late spring of 2013.

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The Results

The course has greatly benefitted by having more-durable, bentgrass putting surfaces that are uniform and provide excellent ball roll. The project also provided the opportunity to extensively modify the upper rootzone, perform minor regrading to remove surface depressions, add subsurface drainage, reestablish lost perimeter areas, regrass greensurrounding roughs and further improve growing environments through tree removal work. The newer bentgrass cultivars have made it possible to reduce water and pesticide use and labor costs associated with syringing and monitoring the greens during summer. The project went surprisingly well. The biggest challenge was coordinating the work and scheduling the various contractors, many of whom traveled great distances. A tight timetable made it imperative to remain on schedule. Fortunately, the weather cooperated and only one day of heavy rain washed out some green surfaces before the new sod was installed.

When asked if he would do it all again, Seaman said absolutely, but if the money was available they would extend the regrassing to include entire approach areas. The value of having the creeping bentgrass surfaces was never more apparent than in the spring of 2014 when annual bluegrass greens at many other courses in the area suffered extensive cold-temperature injury. The bentgrass greens survived the winter in excellent condition. Unfortunately, significant damage occurred in the approaches that were not regrassed.

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Final surface preparations are being made prior to the installation of new, washed, A1/A4 sod on a green at Shaker Ridge Country Club.



A contractor installs the new A1/A4 creeping bentgrass sod to greens at Shaker Ridge Country Club in Loundonville, N.Y.

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Page 3 of 3