

Using Colorant Instead Of Overseeding Fairways

Country Club of Landfall
Jeff Mack, superintendent

Wilmington, N.C. 28405

Issue

The volume of play at the Country Club of Landfall slows—but does not cease—during the winter months. As the bermudagrass goes dormant, the tees, fairways, approaches and collars lose their definition. The club wanted to give these important playing areas better definition during the winter golf season without the resource inputs and turfgrass competition associated with overseeding.

Action

To provide golfers with better visual definition the Country Club of Landfall decided to try using turf paint. A proven track record of aesthetic quality, reasonable prices, and effective application made it an easy sell. The general manager and green committee were briefed on the turf painting process and fully supported implementing the program on fairways, tees, and approaches during the winter of 2013 and early 2014.

Fairways were painted twice during the first winter at an interval of approximately 60 days. The paint was effective for most of the winter, but there was a time period between the second application and the natural spring green-up where painted surfaces had lost nearly all their color. To correct this problem, fairways were painted three times the following winter, instead of twice. The third application did the trick; the painted surfaces had excellent color until the bermudagrass regained its color in the spring.

Results

The turf paint program was well-received by the golfers at the Country Club of Landfall and yielded numerous benefits:

- The painted playing areas had an attractive color and good visual definition during the winter months.
- Painted bermudagrass broke dormancy earlier in the spring because the paint absorbs heat, increasing turf-canopy and soil temperatures. The staff estimates that the painted bermudagrass surfaces were four to six weeks ahead of normal spring growth.



Turf colorants can give excellent color and definition to bermudagrass tees, fairways and approaches during the winter months while using far fewer resources than an overseeding program.

However, the Country Club of Landfall also experienced challenges while using turf paints:

- Developing the proper application technique required significant background research and some trial and error. The agronomic team had to identify the best nozzles to use, the rate of turf paint to apply, determine which direction to apply the paint, how many different directions to paint, and whether to perform the cleanup pass first or last.
- The paint caused a ceramic seal within the sprayer's pump system to crack, causing a leak. Switching from a ceramic seal to an oil seal solved the problem.

The use of turf paint has improved the winter playing experience at the Country Club of Landfall at a fraction of the cost associated with overseeding. Painting playing surfaces rather than overseeding saves water, seed, fertilizer and labor. It also avoids the turf competition and playability issues that arise in overseeded areas. Using turf paint also generated positive recognition for the agronomic team at the Country Club of Landfall—demonstrating to the golfers that the agronomy department is on the cutting edge of new technology