



Wet Conditions Are Not Good For The Game

When course conditions are wet and soft, both fun factor and driving distance decrease.

You just hit your best drive all day – solid, high and straight – but you come to find it has bounced just a couple feet from where it landed due to wet conditions. No roll on wet, soft fairways is frustrating, especially for players with slower swing speeds who really benefit from extra roll. Furthermore, chip and pitch shots are more difficult from wet, soft playing surfaces because it is easier for golf clubs to dig into the ground before contacting the ball – i.e., hit a fat shot. Moreover, with recent memory of a fat shot partially caused by wet conditions, it is



A plugged ball in a fairway is a good indication the golf course is wet and soft. Such conditions are not good for the health of the turf or the health of the game.

is common for golfers to overcompensate and hit a thin shot – i.e., blade the golf ball – sending their ball screaming across the green. Wet turf conditions are not good for the game of golf. One of golf's most well-known players, [Robert Tyre "Bobby" Jones Jr.](#), wrote of soft golf courses in 1932:

"There can be little question that the great mass of golfers in the United States prefer their greens very soft. Such a condition makes the play much easier for all classes of players and is, in a great measure, responsible for the fact that tournament scoring is uniformly lower in the United States than on seaside links in the British Isles."

Healthy, modestly watered turf can provide pleasing aesthetics, good playability and a successful business model. Wet, overwatered turf may yield good aesthetics, but playability will suffer. Furthermore, with significant areas of the United States

experiencing extreme drought, overwatering is bad for business and regional politics. On the other hand, brown, thirsty turf does not stand up to cart traffic and is not aesthetically acceptable to most golfers.

Many golfers prefer firm fairways that promote ball roll and soft greens that accept approach shots. However, if greens are maintained to suit golfers' desire for soft, accepting greens, the putting surfaces will be prone to larger, deeper ball marks and bumpy afternoon conditions under heavy golfer traffic. Furthermore, wet greens promote algae, moss, disease and



undesirable weeds and grasses like *Poa annua*. Soft putting greens can be a result of golfers not letting the superintendent and agronomic staff perform necessary cultural practices like core aeration, vertical mowing and sand topdressing.

Firm conditions reward strategic play. Although firm fairways may cause a course to play slightly shorter; they also make the fairways seem narrower, bringing hazards like bunkers, trees and the rough into play. Firm, dry conditions also make it easier for players to spin the golf ball with a well-struck shot from short grass. When putting greens are soft they will receive almost any shot, no matter how well it was struck.

Healthy turf and consistent playability should be the primary objectives of golf course conditioning. Golf is more fun to play, turf is healthier and water is saved when presenting and maintaining a firm golf course.



Golfers need to let the agronomic staff conduct practices that encourage healthy turf and firm playing conditions. These practices – e.g., topdressing fairways – may temporarily disrupt playing conditions, but the long-lasting benefits are worth the disruption.