



Putting green management is never easy. Resource availability, weather, and soil conditions are just a few of the key factors that impact putting green performance.

PUTTING GREEN MANAGEMENT IS MORE THAN CUTTING GRASS

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It is often said that every golf course is best known or remembered for the condition of their putting greens. Putting conditions can describe various things like smoothness, color, texture, uniformity, speed and firmness. Regardless of which factors you consider most important, there is no doubt that everyone judges a course based on the condition of the putting surfaces. From 30,000 feet, comparing courses and especially putting surfaces is unfair because of the numerous inputs that are required to maintain such conditions. What gets lost in the shuffle are available resources, grass types, budgets, staff size, etc. that are necessary to maintain a golf course.

Golf course superintendents are all cut from a very similar piece of cloth. They strive to condition and prepare the course as best as they can each day with the resources available. In fact, it isn't a stretch to say that superintendents strive to maintain better playing conditions than what the resources suggest

they can provide. It is just in their nature to always improve conditions. That said, it is not always as simple as wanting to do more. Eventually, superintendents must have the labor, equipment, infrastructure and many other items to provide “more” than they already are.

Putting greens will always get the last dollar and most attention when it comes to course maintenance. If we want more speed or firmness because the course down the road is perceived to be faster or firmer, could superintendents make that happen? Perhaps yes, but also consider the other side of that coin. The easy part is double cutting and rolling multiple times per week to increase green speed, but what happens to turf health when the plants are stressed? If turf starts to decline, can the health be brought back in a reasonable amount of time and within the budget provided? These are questions that must be asked and answered before pushing the greens for more speed or firmness.

When it comes to putting green performance and comparisons, it is important to understand that not every course has the ability to cut the greens several times per day, roll often or hand water when necessary. The greens themselves might be the limiting factor by having poor soils, no drainage, weak grasses or a bad growing environment. Thus, when it comes to putting green maintenance, it is vital that the entire picture is considered before making comparisons.