



What To Expect When You're Expecting New Putting Greens



On the surface, new putting greens may appear mature; but young turf needs ample time to develop so it can withstand maintenance and golfer traffic.

Superintendents work hard to deliver smooth, consistent putting surfaces, but sometimes poor drainage, unreliable grasses, or design issues are limiting factors that no amount of experience, budget or equipment can overcome. To address issues like these, golf courses invest in building new putting greens to consistently provide the smooth, true putting surfaces that golfers rave about. However, when an investment is made in new putting greens, expectations should be tempered during the first one to two years until the putting greens can properly mature.

Just because new putting greens look fantastic does not necessarily mean they are ready to withstand the same maintenance practices and golfer traffic as mature greens. New putting greens must be carefully managed to support a healthy transition from seedlings to a mature putting surface. Pushing for fast green speeds on young putting surfaces can quickly result in serious damage. This is not to say that new putting greens cannot deliver smooth, consistent conditions – only that they initially may not be as fast.

Heavy traffic from maintenance equipment and golfers can cause problems on all putting greens, new or old. However, new putting greens are highly susceptible to thinning and wear injury because they have not yet developed a thin layer of organic matter between the grass and the soil. This thin mat layer is necessary for the grass to be resilient and receive incoming shots without experiencing exploding ball marks and collapsing edges around the hole. The mat layer is formed as the grass goes through its normal growing processes, depositing old leaves, stems and roots. Maintenance practices such as aeration and topdressing make sure that the mat layer has enough sand intermixed amongst the old plant material, so it does not become excessive and hold moisture.

New putting greens are a major, long-term investment. Allowing them the time to properly mature will ensure smooth, consistent putting conditions for years to come.