Regional Roundtable – A Quick Look At What's Happening In Your Area

By John Foy and Patrick O'Brien, agronomists, Southeast Region

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John Foy

Winter overseeding is a management practice that is becoming less common because of the agronomic consequences – including increased consumption of resources like water – and the added costs incurred with overseeding. Yet, there are courses that still overseed tees, fairways and even rough to provide lush, green and actively growing turf when the base bermudagrass is semi-to-fully dormant during the peak playing season. During several recent Course Consulting Service visits, I observed that the transition from ryegrass to bermudagrass is underway.

Figure 1 - Increasing temperatures and humidity caused the winter overseeding on this fairway to quickly decline – exposing areas of weak, thin bermudagrass. The "transition blues" is one consequence of winter overseeding.

A proactive management program that gradually thins out the overseeded canopy at the same rate that the base bermudagrass is able to fill in and maintain turf coverage is ideal for minimizing, but not totally eliminating, the "spring transition blues" – a phrase used to describe the period when perennial ryegrass is fading away, but the bermudagrass base is not in top shape. Slightly lowering the height of cut and frequent, light verticutting helps thin out overseeded ryegrass so that increased sunlight can reach the underlying

bermudagrass. In combination with these cultural management practices, it is important that adequate fertilization is applied to support sustained, active bermudagrass growth. To ensure that bermudagrass is able to fully recover from the cumulative stresses of overseeding, the transition process needs to be completed as soon as possible in the early summer so the base bermudagrass has at least 100 growing days without competition.

Pat O'Brien

During recent Course Consulting Service visits to North Carolina, several interesting observations were made. *Pythium* blight caused catastrophic damage to *Poa annua* putting greens at a mountain golf course that received approximately 12 inches of rain during April. Two putting green sites required resodding, and seven other sites will be patched with sod. The cooler soil temperatures and heavy rainfall worked in tandem to produce text-book conditions for *Pythium* blight.

Figure 2 - In early May, Pythium blight devastated this Poa annua putting green in the North Carolina mountains. A few patches of bentgrass were the only plants that survived.

In the transition zone of North Carolina, approximately 16 acres of Tifway bermudagrass fairways at one golf course were severely damaged by February's cold weather when temperatures remained below freezing for a 10-day stretch. Latitude 36 bermudagrass – a new, cold-tolerant bermudagrass developed at Oklahoma State through USGA funding – will be row planted in the damaged areas in mid-June. Recovery should take about 8 weeks after the Latitude 36 is planted. Use of a new bermudagrass variety with improved cold tolerance will help improve the business model at this golf course for the next round of extended cold weather.

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Information on the USGA's Course Consulting Service

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