



Managing Transitions In The Transition Zone

By Elliott Dowling, agronomist, Northeast Region

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The weather this fall has been outstanding. Near record-setting high temperatures were reported throughout the Northeast Region in early November. Limited frost and rain events have allowed courses to operate at practically mid-season form with many courses reporting weekend rounds equal to – or better than – those experienced during peak season.

The above average temperatures mean that some grasses are still growing – albeit not as actively as summer – which has forced many superintendents to mow cool-season playing surfaces more often than normal during this time of year. Furthermore, recent warm temperatures have caused warm-season grasses to stay greener longer. In some instances, warm-season grasses actually greened up after an early October frost.

Although none of us are complaining about the warm days, special care must be given to the transition areas between cool-season and warm-season grasses. Specifically in cases where cool-season greens are being cut multiple times per week, the transition areas between warm-season approaches or roughs and cool-season putting surfaces is subjected to concentrated traffic. Warm-season surrounds can be damaged by concentrated traffic. Even if warm-season turf is green, it is not actively growing and consequently cannot recover from traffic



Repeated, concentrated traffic on grass that is not actively growing can lead to reduced health and longer-than-normal recovery times.

stress. Repeated turning of machines, cart traffic and foot traffic are stressful to plants that are no longer actively growing and have limited potential for recovery.

Turning boards are an excellent way to alleviate traffic stress. Yes, they do require additional time to move, but they are being successfully used at many golf courses in the Northeast Region regardless of the time of year. If your facility does not have the time or resources to use turning boards, constantly adjusting where turns are made will disperse traffic, lessening its affects. Also, several courses use triplex mowers on their greens during mid to late fall to distribute maintenance traffic over a larger area.

Managing warm-season surrounds adjacent to cool-season greens can be a challenge. Measures that limit traffic on warm-season grasses during fall will pay dividends in the spring. However, some sodding might be necessary to gain rapid spring recovery of warm-season surrounds.

Further north, prolonged traffic on bentgrass greens has created challenges. Some greens are showing signs of traffic stress because of extended periods of maintenance.

Conference season has commenced throughout the Northeast Region. Taking advantage of the various educational opportunities is an excellent way to enhance one's skillsets, which ultimately benefits your facility.

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