



Reflections On 2017

By Chris Hartwiger, director, Course Consulting Service | October 20, 2017



The “Aussie method” of bunker preparation reduces washout severity and the likelihood of buried lies.

As some superintendents in the Southeast Region prepare to deal with falling leaves and frost delays, others are gearing up for an influx of golfers ready to enjoy golf this winter. This time of transition is a good opportunity to review several themes that have resonated throughout the region this year.

Managing Weeds – There is no shortcut

Superintendents have access to more products to manage weeds on golf courses than ever before. However, different weed species are becoming problematic and resistance to herbicides is increasing. It seems that whenever a new herbicide is introduced that is particularly effective in controlling a given weed, other weeds that historically were not a problem begin to appear at higher-than-desired levels. Additionally, the increasing occurrence of herbicide-resistant weeds has refuted any notion that a superintendent can rely on an amazingly effective herbicide year after year. To help superintendents with weed management challenges, the University of Tennessee has started a [Weed Diagnostics Center](#) that offers herbicide resistance screening.

Forward Tees - Moving in the right direction

Everybody likes a success story. Currently there is no bigger success story than installing forward tees that offer golfers with slower swing speeds a proportional challenge and enjoyable golf experience. Below are a few of the benefits associated with installing forward tees:

- Improved golfer experience – As summed up by a longtime PGA professional, “The kindest compliment I received in 30 years was when a golfer who tried the forward tees told me he was planning to quit golf because he couldn’t hit it very far any more. But he started playing from the new tees and shot scores that he hadn’t been able to shoot in years. He decided to keep playing.”
- Potential to reduce fairway maintenance costs – Installing forward tees may allow superintendents to reduce fairway acreage at the beginning of a fairway without increasing the carry distance for players using forward tees.
- Improved pace of play – When golfers are playing from tees that allow them to reach par-4 holes in two shots and par-5 holes in three shots they will need fewer strokes to get around the course and will be able to play faster.
- Better for business – Any time golfer enjoyment is increased and pace of play accelerates it is good for business. Happy customers are repeat customers.

The “Aussie Method” of Bunker Raking – It continues to catch on

The “Aussie method” is a style of bunker preparation where the bottoms of bunkers are raked while perimeters are smoothed. The goal is to allow the sand along the perimeter of bunkers to become firm to reduce washouts and decrease the likelihood of buried lies. Superintendents report success in these areas when using the Aussie method. More importantly, golfers have accepted this style of bunker maintenance. The big question is whether the Aussie method saves labor hours. The answer varies based upon the amount of time spent smoothing the perimeters.

Southeast Region Agronomists:

Steve Kammerer, regional director – skammerer@usga.org

Chris Hartwiger, director, USGA Course Consulting Service- chartwiger@usga.org

Patrick M O’Brien, agronomist – patobrien@usga.org

Todd Lowe, agronomist – tlowe@usga.org

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[Contact the Green Section Staff](#)