



Bermudagrass Fairway and Rough Management Field Day

By John H. Foy, director, Southeast Region

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On July 15, a group of more than 40 golf course superintendents and industry representatives gathered at the Country Club of Naples in Naples, Fla. for a bermudagrass fairway- and rough-management field day. For decades, bermudagrass has been the predominant turf species on golf courses throughout the Southeast Region. Naturally, one might ask why a fairway- and rough-management field day was needed, but due to the recent rapid growth in popularity and use of Celebration bermudagrass, it was felt that a review of bermudagrass management practices would be helpful.

The field day was a unique educational opportunity, providing a forum for discussions on bermudagrass management practices including aeration, verticutting, fertilization, growth regulator treatments, and no-till renovation – a process that has become the standard method of converting to Celebration. The discussions helped identify best management practices for existing Celebration fairways and roughs and provided baseline information to courses that are planning or considering converting to Celebration bermudagrass.

The field day began with a demonstration of fraze mowing followed by a tour of four prearranged stops. Each stop featured various cultural management practices or equipment used to maintain the Celebration fairways and roughs at the Country Club of Naples.

Field Day Highlights

Fraze Mowing:

Fraze mowing is an extremely aggressive verticutting process, and its application on golf courses may be limited because of slow operating speed and concerns about disposing the tremendous quantity of organic debris generated by the process. However, fraze mowing could be used on golf courses to renovate practice tees and remove collar ridges around putting greens.



Field day attendees discussed managing Celebration bermudagrass and had a chance to observe fraze mowing at the Country Club of Naples.

Routine Mowing and Verticutting:

Compared to Tifway 419 bermudagrass, Celebration bermudagrass has a much more aggressive, stoloniferous growth habit, making Celebration playing surfaces prone to developing pronounced surface grain. Using multiple mowing patterns – i.e., a combination of straight, diagonal and circle cutting – is advised to minimize grain development. Also, it is strongly recommended to not burn in striped mowing patterns on fairways during the winter. While a lot of golfers like nicely striped fairways, pronounced grain patterns will quickly develop when fairway stripes are burned into fairways.

Verticutting also is an extremely important grain-management practice. Verticutting helps control thatch and surface organic matter accumulation while promoting upright, dense shoot growth. Promoting upright shoot growth minimizes grain and provides optimum ball lies throughout the year. As with mowing, it is important to routinely alter verticutting patterns to minimize grain.

Fertilization and Growth Regulator Treatments:

Due to its inherently blue-green color, it was initially thought that fertilization requirements of Celebration would be significantly less than other bermudagrass cultivars. It also was thought that low nitrogen fertilization was best for minimizing thatch development. However, many superintendents have stated that, to maintain year-round, high-quality playing conditions, the general fertilization requirements of Celebration bermudagrass is very similar to previously used, older bermudagrass varieties. Although there may not be a large difference in fertilization requirement, it has been observed that lower rates of the turfgrass growth regulator trinexapac-ethyl can be used to manage Celebration bermudagrass compared to older bermudagrass varieties. Applying trinexapac-ethyl to Celebration bermudagrass at rates recommended for Tifway bermudagrass totally shuts down growth and recovery for an extended period of time.

Course Consulting Service Visits

It is impossible to review all of the information that was exchanged during the bermudagrass fairway- and rough-management field day in this Regional Update. Best management practices for Celebration bermudagrass are being identified and fine-tuned every day. Thus, we encourage those managing Celebration bermudagrass, or those considering converting to Celebration, to subscribe to a USGA Green Section Course Consulting Service visit. The USGA Course Consulting Service provides a unique opportunity to learn from USGA agronomists that observe Celebration bermudagrass best management practices throughout the Southeast Region. During USGA Course Consulting Service visits, expert USGA agronomists also share thoughts on numerous other aspects of golf course management to help you achieve the highest quality playing surfaces for your course.

A special thanks to Bill Davidson, CGCS, golf course superintendent at the Country Club of Naples, and the Country Club of Naples for hosting the field day and the Everglades Golf Course Superintendents Association for providing a wonderful lunch.

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