

Every Bunker Has A Green Lining

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February 15, 2007

During the past two plus decades of golf course visits in the western United States, many interesting methods of bunker construction have been viewed. In some cases, cutting corners to reduce costs have been necessary and the results have been acceptable while others have proven less successful.

While many have successfully addressed the issue of soil and rock contamination with the use of liners or various types of soil stabilizers, the idea of using grass as a filter was first noted at Eastmoreland GC in Portland, OR. Mr. Steve Hoiland seeded under the bunkers, allowed the perennial ryegrass to grow for 8-10 weeks, eliminated it with a non-selective herbicide, and used the organic remains as a way to stabilize the soil. This technique was viewed more than 10 years ago and a turf tip was presented on this unique and effective way to minimize sand contamination (May/June 1999 *Green Section Record* - [Saving Zoller's Dollars](#)).

While the use of seed has proven effective, the next step was the use of sod. Mr. Steve Kealy, CGCS, Glendale CC used perennial ryegrass sod eight years ago with quality results still being achieved to date. The same method of sod use was conducted at Rainier CC by Superintendent Sam Sprague approximately four years ago with equal success. With this positive track record, Mr. Scott Young and the Green Committee at Canterwood G&CC have embarked on a similar use of sod for a natural liner to reduce inherent problems with rock and soil contamination. Working with Golf Course Architect John Harbottle and Shaper Kip Kalbrenner, this threesome is taking a worst case of bunker contamination from washouts and turning these hazards into well drained bunkers during the middle of one of the wettest winters seen in the Pacific Northwest.

One of the keys has been the use of sod that stops soil contamination within the bunker cavity while perimeter areas divert water away from the bunkers. The use of ball retrievers has kept golfers off the sod as it has already developed 2-3" of roots with another seven weeks of growth before the sand will be installed. Of course, the moment the first bunker sand is installed, the complaints about these hazards will begin once again.

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