

And Now For Something Completely Different

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There have been several articles written that discuss the importance of differentiating between regular golf course conditions and course conditions at national championships. However, the recently completed APL Championships at Bandon Dunes on the southern Oregon coast displayed some completely different sets of circumstances not usually seen at our other national championships.



1. All fescue, all the time. Perhaps one of the most unique aspects of Bandon Dunes has been the near 100% use of fine-leaf fescues on all of the playing surfaces. The greens for both championships were a combination of red and chewings fescue maintained at a .200" mowing height. Any other grass maintained at this height would cause unacceptable green speeds. However, the green speeds for both courses ranged from 10'6" to 11'3" (Old MacDonald and Bandon Trails) based on the difference in wind at the two sites. Regardless, this mowing height range allowed minimal watering and hand watering due to the deep root systems in this dune sand site.
2. Old MacDonald outside green perimeters. While the playing of national championships on a fescue golf course is uncommon (only Chambers Bay with the 2010 U.S. Amateur has fulfilled this criterion), there is a different approach to putting green mowing practice at Old MacDonald. Rather than doing a 'clean-up' pass on the green perimeters, the greens were simply mowed with no distinct edge. This idea was prompted to minimize

wear damage to the fescue on the green perimeters, but it led to the most unique aspect of these two championships.

3. Old MacDonald and Bandon Trails green definition. Since there was no identifiable perimeter at the greens at either of the two golf courses, the decision was made to use white paint and dot the edge every few feet. When completed, every few days the players and rules officials could then make the proper ruling as to whether the player was on or off the putting surface.
4. You take the pull carts where! One of the weaknesses of fine-leaf fescue is its susceptibility to traffic wear. To eliminate this problem on the areas around the greens, it has been a common practice for years to allow wide-tire pull carts to cross over the greens. With sand as a base, deep roots, no trees and massive putting surfaces, this different approach has worked well.
5. Divot filling in the fairways. A common practice at Bandon Dunes is the filling of divots. However, the difference is how they do it. Because they desire to avoid driving on the fairways (generally, power carts are not allowed at Bandon Dunes), wide-tire pull carts are required, and 5-gallon buckets are used to fill these blemishes.



6. Everyone knows it's windy! Bandon Dunes is not unlike any links golf course when it comes to wind, but when it blows hard from the north, certain bunkers need to be worked on. Three times during the practice rounds and in competition, a hard north wind (gusts to 25-30 MPH) moved so much sand in 3-4 bunkers that more than a foot of sand needed to be shoveled back

over the base. As noted in the photo, the base was not sand, which led to the next unique aspect of this championship.

7. Stones are not always stones. Although stones in bunkers is a problem on many golf courses, and is addressed in the Rules of Golf (Appendix 1, Part b, Item 5), the issue at Bandon Dunes was different. The “stones” at both courses are comprised of the native soils found under the sand. This soil (red shot) is highly compressed, but it can be broken by hand. Since it looked like stones, the decision was made to classify this soil as such, with players allowed to remove them from the many bunkers on both courses.

Championship conditions should always be different from regular playing conditions. At Bandon Dunes they truly were different!

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