

THE WIND FACTOR



Seaside links are more exposed to the elements

IT'S quite common to see a golfer, before teeing off, pick up a few grass blades and toss them into the air to determine which way the wind is blowing. For having some idea of wind direction is critical to the experienced player.

Wind is one of the major factors contributing to the playing strategy of a golf course, particularly the seaside links, which are more exposed to the elements. In windy conditions, golfers find it difficult to remain steady and maintain a smooth swing. The flight of a ball is affected by a cross-wind, and even putting is difficult in blustery conditions.

According to the records, Andrew Lang, the poet who wrote so much about St Andrews, drove into a high wind that carried his ball backwards into a bunker behind the tee.

Yet, when American Craig Wood was involved in a play-off for the 1933 Open Championship at St Andrews, he was assisted by such a strong following wind that he drove his ball into the bunker on the face of the hill just short of the fifth green - an estimated 430 yards!

Wind is essentially air in motion, with both velocity and directional components. It consists of a succession of gusts and lulls, rather than a uniform velocity. Wind is usually the result of differences in the density of pressure of the atmosphere.

A diurnal variation in wind velocity is frequently observed in temperate climates, with maximum velocity generally occurring around noon and the minimum at daybreak and dusk.

Warm, damp winds from the south and west are usual in Britain at all times of the year and are largely responsible for the mildness of the climate. Easterly winds are less common than winds from the south and west, and are usually drier and colder.

The North Sea is shallow and cold, so, when the wind is blowing from the east, east coast areas are cool in summer and cold in winter.

Wind affects turf growth in a number of ways, according to the location, and it generally influences the turf by cooling, increasing transpiration, abrasive action or the displacement and transport of soil, sand, snow, pollen, seeds etc.

Turf can be protected from the drying action of winds by using protective windbreaks. Strategic placement of trees and shrubs can serve as wind-breaks.

It's important to have a reasonable circulation of wind and

air in the proximity of greens. Those which are constructed in sheltered locations can have problems with restricted air flow, making them more prone to prolonged moisture and fungal disease.

In the United States and Canada, wind is also a serious hazard in the transfer and deposition of snow on golf courses in the winter. Elevated, exposed areas do not receive as much precipitation as hollows and protected places due to snow removal by the force of the wind.

This often results in areas of maximum exposure being characterised by dry soils and severe winter desiccation problems. Snow fences and brushwood are often used on courses to protect turf from the drying action of the wind as well as providing more uniform snow distribution.

Greenkeepers on seaside courses are aware of the problems of sowing grass seed on light sandy soils when seeding can often be lost in brief periods of high winds. Practices that help to minimise this problem are keeping the seedbed perpendicular to the prevailing winds or using windbreaks.

Wind dissemination of weed seeds is an avenue for the constant spread of weeds into fine turf. Light seeds, or seeds with a wing-like structure, are ideally adapted to wild transport.

The parachute-like pappus of the dandelion is a typical example. Wind is also important in the dissemination of spores of many turf pathogens.

Playing on links courses in windy conditions, many golfers have experienced the blinding effects and stinging sensation on their cheeks caused by windblown sand from dune areas and bunkers in exposed situations.

The disposition of wind-blown sand can have serious effects on surrounding turf, for it may smother the grass completely and cause severe damage. The abrasive action of windblown sand can also have a damaging effect. Turf plants are frequently sheared off at the soil surface by the abrasive blasting action of gale-force winds. Only the tough, indigenous dune grasses are adapted to these conditions.

Salt spray is sometimes a problem on coastal courses, too, and this is caused by the action of the sea dashing against the rocks and shoreline, which produces a salt spray that drifts inland. Succulent grasses that are not adapted to these conditions are very susceptible to foliar injury from the windborne salt spray.

Now Working on the SOUTH COURSE at WENTWORTH

GOLF LANDSCAPES LTD.

ASHWELLS ROAD
BENTLEY, BRENTWOOD
ESSEX: CM15 9SR

Telephone: (0277) 73720
Telex: 995215 GOLF LG



*The proven experience in the field
for construction, drainage and irrigation*