

Expect 'disastrous' results from turf grown on the wrong soil

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fications, and so one has to accept a compromise when buying turf. As long as turf is grown on soils that do not have more than 20% of particles smaller than 0.125mm and less than 10% of silt and clay then the chances of success are greatly increased.

The consequences of using turf grown on soil containing a high percentage of fine particles are disastrous. What happens, under wet conditions, is that the fine particles migrate into the air spaces and effectively block off the natural drainage channels. Rain and irrigation water cannot get down to the underlying drains and the turf stays wet and spongy. The only recourse in this case is a prolonged period of intense aeration, hollow coring and top-dressing with the proper rootzone mixture.

It is really the combination of heavy wear and wet conditions that causes the problem. Turf that is suitable for countless other situations may not be appropriate for the demanding job that is expected of today's golf tees; greens; and surrounds. It is crucial in any specification for turf for these situations to include the correct physical soil characteristics, as well as the other quality features expected to produce the highest standard of playing surface.

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FROM THE EDITOR

One of the greatest pleasures afforded me each April is my visit to Augusta and The Masters. This year was no exception and I was as thrilled as anyone to actually witness 'Woosie' – or 'that darlin' boy, Iron Woodsman' as he was christened by one softly spoken Southern Belle – win in such dramatic fashion. Whilst the victory was a personal triumph for Ian and another shining nail in the coffin of American golfing dominance it raised one point that just will not go away. I refer to the continuous chuntering of TV and radio commentators, officials, journalists and especially players, all expounding upon the great green speed saga – an everyday story of slick and trick. No doubt you received the same treatment via satellite TV and I can imagine both your reactions and those of your club members. Thus it seems appropriate at this time to place on record a view that I have long held, one which greenkeepers throughout Britain and Europe will no doubt be in total accord – speed kills!

The Masters has no monopoly when it comes to rapid putting surfaces, indeed having played at Augusta National and many other championship courses in America and on close to 200 courses in Britain, I feel as well qualified as any to opine that it's the wretched stimpmeter – or the thinking behind it – that has done more to set the rank and file golfer on a stampede toward demanding quicker and quicker greens, to the great detriment of club golf generally and at the cost of vastly increased green maintenance costs.

In the United States, where they have a knack for measuring everything and a penchant for using the latest in high-tec to prove the point, the noted architect, Pete Dye, had old movies of a US Open in the sixties analysed by mathematic boffins, discovering that green speeds then, although believed to have been "very fast", were something like two or three inches slower than the average championship speeds of today.

That stated, British club golfers – indeed golfers everywhere – fired by the sight of superstars and

their undoubted ability to shoot low numbers on beautifully manicured and ultra-slick turf, continue to howl for a course in their back yard that exhibits the same characteristics, mistaken in their belief that quicker is better and emerald green the only correct colour.

Now this 'demand' philosophy has spilled over to the superstars themselves, with carping remarks made recently about the condition of St.Mellion, where the budget is undoubtedly a much smaller one than that of Augusta National and where weather, turf and growing characteristics are totally different.

Perhaps golfers should be aware also that those escalating costs – which they pay for in ever increasing subscriptions – are due to factors for which our forefathers cannot be blamed. These include the practice of cutting greens seven days a week at many British courses, the introduction of thinner bottom blades which allow greens to be scalped, the introduction of verticutters and groomers which remove excess growth and the increase in top dressing, once a practice that took place twice a year and now a regular (and in view of the above) necessary monthly exercise.

Add to these factors the vastly increased traffic experienced almost everywhere, traffic which brings with it such "nasties" as compaction, dry patch and a higher probability of turf disease and it is small wonder the poor greenkeeper is tearing out his hair.

Returning to Dye, commenting on the USGA's attempt to raise \$10 million to find a hardier turf, his suggestion is one that deserves exposure beyond those shores: "All that is necessary," he says, "is for them to raise the height of cut!" If all this seems too simplistic, tell your members that green speeds – and the increased management programme necessary to maintain them – have increased in direct proportion to their subscriptions. See how that grabs them!

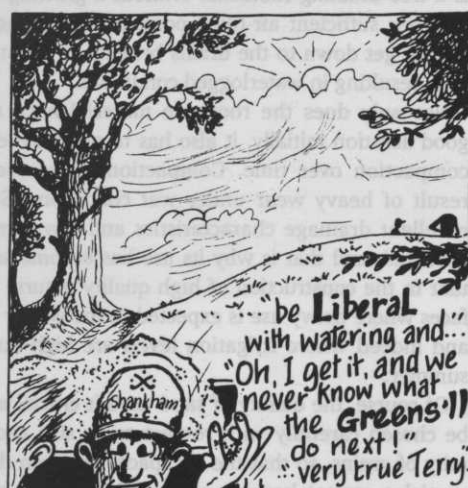
David White

Slow down

Your speed is killing me!



On the BRIGHT side...



All characters are fictitious