



HOT TIP ✓

Barrie Gregson, course supervisor at Mottram Hall Hotel

I have sand greens at Mottram Hall. God, have I had problems. Some of these problems are from a form of compaction and compaction is not something I would normally worry about on sand greens.

My greens are sat on a very correct stone carpet which, in turn, is blinded by a geotextile separation membrane. On top of this is a sand which, although it conforms to a recognised specification, everything is at its maximum regarding particle sizes.

Add to this the fact that the depth varies somewhere between 12 and 18 inches and you may start to recognise signs of problems.

Firstly, with natural rainfall and irrigation, plus normal maintenance, the 2 per cent clay and the 2 per cent silt and the 2 per cent fines have all started migrating downwards leaving all the larger stuff at the top. When the fines reached the geotextile membrane, they blocked it up. This caused three distinct problems:

1. Water cannot pass through at the rate it was intended;
2. Now the build-up of fines in the lower reaches act as a compacted layer and a filter for any nutrients that are trying to pass by.
3. Water and nutrients race through the top 4 or 5 inches where my grassroots need them to be. Because of this filtering effect I have got what can only be described as a hot layer, and when roots reach it, they burn off causing the death of the plant.

Our solution was to cut through the membrane. But without a separation layer, the sand would eventually pass through into the drainage stone below and block that up too. So we hired in a verti-drain, a big verti-drain, the one with the 18-inch tines on and passed

over each and every green.

We followed up the verti-drain by filling in the holes with Lyt-ag, the idea being that it would act as a blinding layer, therefore stopping the migration of sand but allowing the reasonably normal amounts of water and nutrients to pass through. Incidentally, we filled in the holes by hand using scoops and funnels. You should have seen my lads' faces! In general, it worked. It solved three of my problems, but not the other 17. When I've solved those, you'll read about it here first.

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Happy is the greenkeeper who knows what his members want. But, remember, lady members are the most important because most of them sleep with male members – I mean, they are usually married to male members. It is very important for the greenkeeper to understand this fact, especially when constructing a new ladies' tee or just working on the course on certain days. Treat them right or forever rue the day. Awesome pressure comes from this direction.

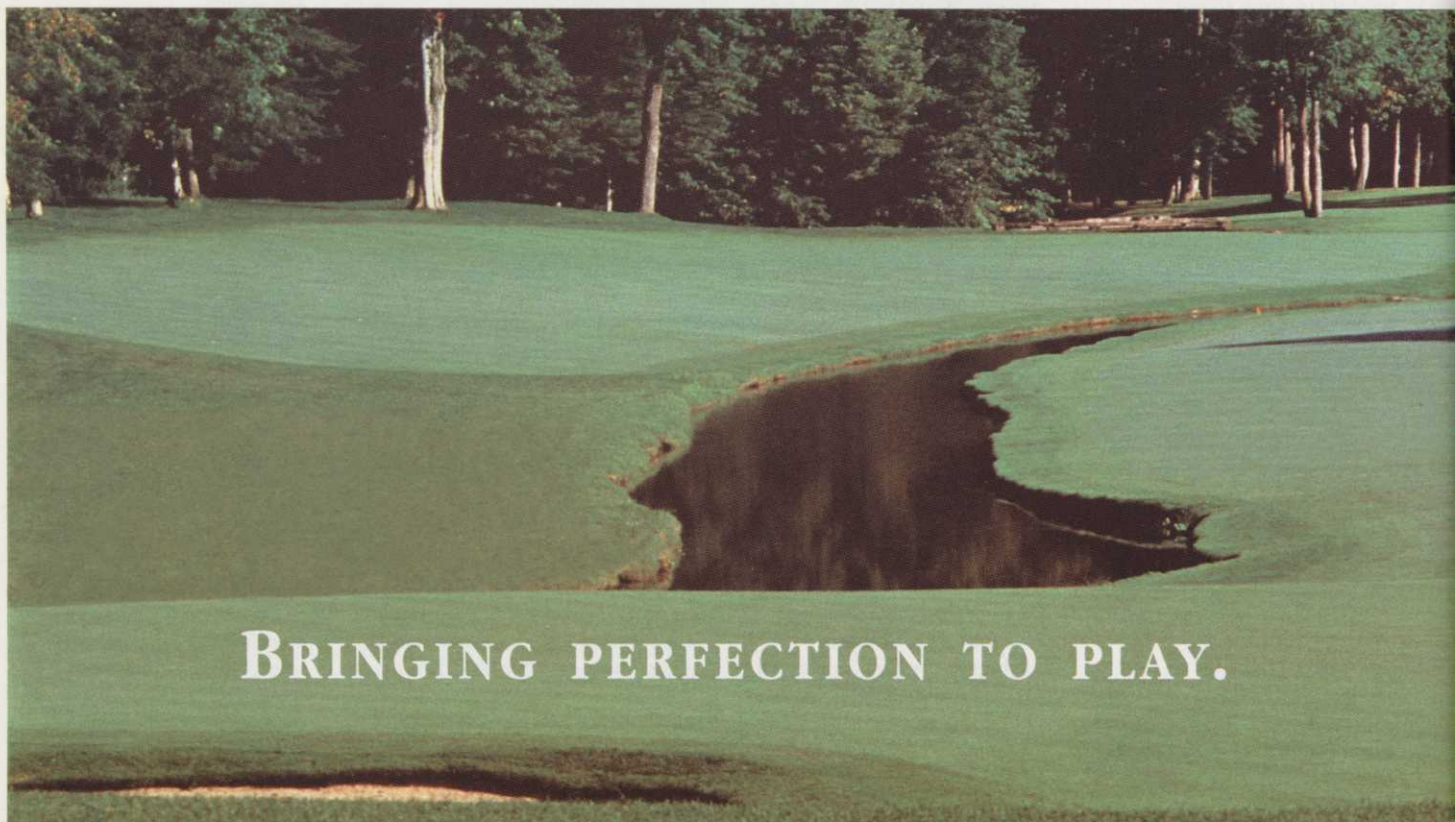


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Alan Mitchell, course manager at The Hampshire Golf Club

A golf course can be built and open for play in less than a year. Work on The Hampshire Golf Club, a pay-and-play course with membership aimed between a municipal course and a members' club, began early last year and by September it was open for limited play. Built on downland near Andover, the site boasts an 18-hole course, a nine-hole par 3 course and a driving range.

Dry weather during February and March helped the project and the greens were prepared and sown by April. An 80/20 rootzone of Kingsley sand and fen soil was chosen. All fairways and tees were sown by the end of May. The installation of the irrigation system was not completed until September and erratic irrigation resulted in some



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patchy germination on greens.

Although inevitably very young, the course opened for limited play at the end of September and was played throughout the winter, only closing on one day when covered with snow. The greens came through remarkably well and are now improving quickly with the spring growth.

Because of the need for cover, the greens were fed with high nitrogen fertiliser until the end of October and we were on guard for disease problems. In the event, we had little disease although it was often a damp winter.

In November, we constructed the nine-hole par 3 and had the greens ready for sowing at the beginning of December. Wanting to speed the growing in of the greens, I decided to sow at once with pre-germinated seed and cover the greens with gro-cover. We sowed the second week in December but were only able to get the covers on two greens because of heavy rain. The seed germinated anyway due to the mild wet weather and by the middle of January we had a light cover. At the end of February we commenced feeding and in March we were able to start weekly mowing. This has gained us several months on the greens.

If we can continually work on just these three points, I am certain we will be held in much higher regard by our employer and even the general public – that way the greenkeeper, who in my experience always puts pride in his work before all else, will be rewarded with higher esteem and a better salary. He will then give a far superior service and therefore better product, ie golf course.

CONTROVERSY OF THE CONFERENCE

You would imagine that one of the 17 talks would have provided the most controversy. But, no, it was the sixth to last question at the quiz night. The question was: How many broken clubs can a golfer replace during each round? Most contestants said none, but the answer Trivial Pursuits gives is one. We checked with the R&A who said: "As many as you like provided they were broken DURING THE COURSE OF NATURAL PLAY." Thus, if the player swings at a ball and wraps his club round a tree in the follow-through, he can replace it. But, if he swings and misses and wraps his club round the tree in temper, he can't. If a golf cart runs over his bag and breaks all his clubs, he can get a new set. If he chucks the bag in a lake, he can't.



HOT TIP

David Oatis, director, green section Northeastern Region, USA

What can be done to avert a disaster, such as massive loss of turf? The first step is to take an offensive approach rather than a defensive one. Act, don't react. Call in appropriate consultants and begin a fact-finding mission. Analyse the course's strong points as well as its weak ones. Look for potential problems in the water management systems, including irrigation and drainage, since failure here guarantees turf loss. Examine the growing environment around greens and tees. What is the air circulation situation like? Are trees becoming a problem? Is the majority of the turf the best-suited species or variety? Does your turf have a reasonable

chance for survival if the weather becomes unfavourable? All of these questions need to be answered before a plan of attack can be devised.

The golfers must be kept well informed. New programmes are more readily accepted by those who understand why failures occurred and what is being done to prevent them from recurring. They should be made to feel part of the decision-making process. Do not be surprised if the problems are complex and cannot be solved by a single solution. Usually, a variety of factors are involved. Don't fall into the trap of looking for a painless solution to your course's problems. It is very rare for a single piece of equipment, soil additive, growth enhancer, pesticide etc to turn a programme around. Severe problems rarely develop overnight and solutions require time, funding and patience to work effectively. In short, do not wait for disaster to strike, anticipate it. If disaster has already struck, use it to help sell the necessary corrective programmes. Don't be afraid to look at a bad year in a good light and use it to the golf course's advantage.



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