

WATER OR BLUEGRASS

Many of the touring golf professionals don't like to play their game on bluegrass fairways. Too many fliers, so they say. Hard to control the ball. I say, a box of triple bogies to you, sir. There are times when conditions on bentgrass fairways are not always perfect, either. Hitting a shot into the grain certainly will give different results than hitting a shot with the grain. When one hears the touring pro's complain about unsatisfactory playing conditions on bluegrass turf, the average golfers, the ones that really support the game and make it possible to balance the maintenance budget, hear these critical remarks and are ready to condemn the turfgrass on their course.

My purpose of writing this is not to criticize the golfer who has a problem with his score on the golf course, but to call to the attention of golfers the serious problem that we may be faced with in the near future—a shortage of water. As the population continues to increase and industrial markets increase to support a larger population, ground water levels have already receded significantly. It should be obvious to everyone that water levels will not increase in future years. A steady decline is inevitable. When the time comes that there is not enough water to satisfy everyone, you can be sure that golf course fairways will have a low priority. Golf courses in areas of California, Florida, and New York are at this time receiving water by allocation only.

Those of us who understand the growing habits of the grass plant know that one of the requirements of bent and poa annua is a relatively large amount of water. Without sufficient water the plant will die. This is not true with the bluegrass strain of grass. It will turn off color during periods of drought. One can get good lies on off color turf, normally better than on green lush turfgrass. During certain periods Kentucky bluegrass turf may look to be completely dead. However, after a good rain it is back to its original condition.

I remember years ago when the top touring golfers were Bobby Jones, Walter Hagen, Byron Nelson, Ben Hogan, Harry Cooper, and others. **They won many tournaments on bluegrass fairways with scores comparable to those that you see today and using equipment that was technically inferior to today's golf clubs.**

Therefore, golf courses should not be too hasty to change their bluegrass turf to bentgrass. There could be a time coming when fairway irrigation will be prohibited. Let us not be swayed by statements made by those who are only interested in their own financial benefit.

Ray Gerber-Editor

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