

HOW TO REPAIR A BALL MARK

The Trouble With Ball Marks

The ball landed with a thud. The green was soft, and as the ball bounced forward it left a deep little crater in the turf, exposing brown dirt at the back and grass blades pushed together at the front.

Ignoring this little crater, the golfer walked up to his ball, cleaned it, holed his putt, and gleamed with self-satisfaction.

Some hours later, after the exposed dirt in the ball mark had dried out, another golfer found the damaged area in his line of putt. He attempted repairs, but the result was not very satisfactory. An unflattened bit of turf twisted his putt of line.

Next morning an inexperienced greenkeeper mowed the putting surface without repairing the ball marks. The result was a putting surface pock-marked, untrue and covered with bare spots where the mower scalped the grass from the turf.

What Happens

What actually happens when a ball mark is not promptly and properly repaired?

1. Soil is exposed, and so the area immediately surrounding the ball dries up faster than it would if the ball marks were repaired, and thus a blemish is left on the green.

2. There is a chance that the raised turf by the ball will dry quickly and may die out.

3. The open soil invites weed invasion, such as crabgrass, silver crabgrass, POA ANNUA, dandelion, plantain, or Pearlwort ... seeds of which could be brought in on the shoes of golfers, caddies or workers or on mowing equipment.

4. The improperly repaired or neglected ball marks leave a bumpy spot in the green. If not corrected before cutting the next day, then the spot is scalped by the mower and the bruise mark will remain for several days.

William H. Bengeyfield, Western Director of Green Section, says: "From an agronomic viewpoint, a ball mark bruises a grass plant and severely damages or destroys the meristem or growing point. This means that the turf recovery must take place from the perimeter of the damaged area, and this takes considerable time. Rapid drying of the damaged area is a major factor in delaying recovery. Some soil compaction also results from the balls impact."

How to Make Repairs

There is a correct way to repair a ball mark and, simply stated, it is to stretch the turf back over the bruised area, then loosen the soil beneath so that the bruised turf is able to root again.

To loosen the soil, some sharp pointed instrument is required, such as a golf tee. The instrument must be sharp enough to penetrate the soil easily and strong enough to cut through soil laterally at a depth of one inch or less. In stretching the turf back over the ball mark area, try not to tear it loose. After the soil is loosened, the bruised and stretched turf must be firmed or pressed down to make contact with the soil again; otherwise it may dry and die.

If a divot is taken when the ball hits the green and skids, the divot must be carefully stretched and replaced.

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