

MAGCS Directors Column

Preparing for the Big One

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While most of us do not have a major PGA or USGA Tournament to prepare for, we all have at least one key golf event each year which is very important to our individual clubs. At Westmoreland, our special day is called Tam Day. It always falls on the first Monday in August. It is a Member-guest stag day.

Preparation for the event is not an overnight thing. The early August date makes the entire golfing season a challenge, because we want as near perfect as possible golf conditions for the special day. Any turf failure before then will be reflected that day. For Tam Day we strive to have the golf course groomed to the highest degree.

1985, for the most part, has given us a near perfect year weather wise. For the first time in my 23 years in the Chicago area, we have had what can be called a real spring. The temperatures have been great. Eleven times, as of this early August writing, we have had a cool high pressure move in after two or three days of hot, humid weather. Rainfall has been below normal, but with an adequate irrigation system, the moisture level is controllable. It happens to be my first year with a new completely automatic irrigation system. For the first time in 23 years, I have total control over irrigation. I never thought it possible to go through three-fourths a season without a wet spot.

All good things usually come to an end. 1985 has been no exception. On the Wednesday before our special event we received a near perfect 1.50 inches of rain. It was what was needed for our dormant roughs. Sunday night another .60 inches of rain fell. Fairway mowing on Monday was questionable. The grass was long; it needed mowing. The wet conditions favored waiting a day for drier conditions. By early afternoon the grass was even longer; it had to be mowed. We mowed, and had enough clippings to bale. That's alright, the forecast looks good; we can mow again tomorrow and better disperse the clippings.

Never believe a forecast. At 1:30 A.M. I was awakened by lightning, thunder and heavy rain. At 5:00 A.M. I discovered the effects of the rain. The fairways were flooded, 22 traps were full of water, 42 bunkers were badly eroded and grass clippings, were drifted everywhere. The day had been planned for our final manicuring; 1.60 inches of rain in 15 minutes changed our plans. Two men pumped sand traps, 4 men repaired eroded bunkers and 4 men raked, vacuumed and picked up drifted grass clippings. Eleven and one-half hours later we were finished, the 70th Annual Tam Day will go as planned — minus the final mowing.

Yes, it happens to us all from time to time. Weather conditions completely reorganize our plans.

The Bunker Sand Trap

by Judith Ferguson Gockel
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Choosing a new bunker sand has many of the elements of organized gambling; if you are lucky or particularly skillful you could win, but the odds are not on your side. It is possible to even things up, if some of the basic guidelines for making the selection are observed.

In the laboratory, several factors are taken into account. We make recommendations based on particle size, distribution of the particles, particle shape, color, cleanliness, and cost. After we have done all of that, we then bring the whole thing into the real world, by firing a golf ball into a pile of the sand almost horizontally, and then dropping it from a height sufficient to achieve something close to terminal velocity. If the material passes these tests, it is going to be fine.

For the individual in the field, doing the initial selection, there are some points to consider. The first consideration is particle size. Experience has demonstrated that having the majority of the particles in the .25MM to the 1.0MM range provides the most satisfactory results. By majority, incidently, we are referring to 85% or more of the material, not merely a percentage large enough to elect a President.

Particles exceeding 1.0MM work their way toward the top of any aggregation, while the fines are moved downward through the coarser materials. Any mixture of particles will demonstrate this characteristic while achieving stability.

Large particles blasted onto the green can cause damage to equipment, as well as becoming an uncomfortable hazard to bystanders. Deposits of the recommended sand range are usually very similar to the material used for topdressing; consequently they create few problems. An excess of fine particles often indicate the presence of significant amounts of soil materials; these associated silts and clays can create serious drainage problems, or complicate existing ones.

It is most desirable to have the bulk of the particles in the .5MM to .25MM range, except where frequent high or gusty winds occur. In this instance, it is advisable to go to the larger size range.

Particle shape is harder to determine, and is largely a subjective determination in the field. There is no national standard for sand; one company's mason sand may be another's concrete or glass sand. You can at least request an angular or sub-angular sand, which terms have loose meanings to most suppliers. The problems engendered by round sands make a determined search for angular materials worthwhile. Round sands are theorized to have been windblown at some point in their history; the forces which create them are too great to have been mere water movement. They are inappropriate for most golf course uses, since they shift under pressures of various sorts. A good analogy is a boxful of ball bearings; if you apply pressure at any point everything moves eventually. Pity the hapless golfer, slowly sinking beneath a tide of encroaching sand, while slashing hopelessly at his invisible ball.

Angular materials have some flat sides which interlock with those of other particles, establishing stability quickly, and retaining it well in the long term. It is possible to go too far into the region of the angular, truly sharp sands may pack too hard, making explosion shots difficult. These determinations are dif-

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