

Sand Trap Renovation

by Mike Nass

Every year there seems to be a different area of golf course that gets singled out for constructive criticism. Often times the same areas are singled out in general throughout the District. This year sand traps seemed to have been the most frequent topic of discussion.

After listening to complaints about the supposed lack of sand in our traps, I astutely determined something should be done to correct this situation. The first step was to accurately define the problem. There actually was more than enough sand in the traps, but its quality was poor. Over the past twenty years or so, through four superintendents, sand had been added regularly, with each superintendent probably using a different sand. The results were a product that made a reasonable roadbed but a so-so trap. The general appearance of these traps was somewhat dull and dirty. This added to the preception of no sand in the traps.

To add enough new sand to the existing traps to achieve our desired results would have left the traps overfilled. It was decided to remove all the old sand and replace it with new sand, improving the consistency of play and the general appearance.

We were going to attempt to do this for the green traps on all the holes, except the three that had been rebuilt two years ago. This amounted to twenty-eight traps.

To facilitate the removal of the old sand, we rented a Bobcat loader. This turned out work very well. It had sufficient power to move the sand and the maneuverability to work in a tight area.

The removal went smoothly, but a problem arose as what to do with all the old sand. Since we have a limited dump area, we decided to use the sand, contaminated with dirt, to construct target greens on our driving range. We were able to construct three good sized greens to which we will add simulated traps of crushed limestone next spring. The entire removal process took about four weeks using just two or three men.

As for the new sand, we are using a mason sand from Old Dutch. We are filling the traps to a depth of four to six inches. The wet weather has hindered our progress but as of Thanksgiving we had six traps that remained empty.

We are dumping the new sand inside the traps and leaving it to be spread later. The spreading will be done by an outside contractor using a swinger loading tractor. This same method has been used successfully at other courses in the area. Approximately three hundred tons of sand can be spread per day in this manner.

When the job is finished, I expect I will have used about one thousand tons of new sand. The total cost of the project is expected to be about \$15,000 excluding in house labor.

It is hoped that with new sand and new target greens we will have eliminated two problems and will be ready to face new problems when and if they arise next year.

Turfgrass Research a Vital Need

The golf course industry is sitting on a time bomb.

The ticking may be a little difficult to hear, amongst all the talk of billion dollar purses, \$40 million, 54-hole real estate developments and new golf balls that travel 100 yards and sing the national anthem, but it's ticking away.

Somewhere between now and the turn of the century, experts predict, the high cost of golf course maintenance and restrictions caused by water shortages will undoubtedly catch up with, and could severely cripple, the golf industry.

This is a bomb that will have to be diffused through turfgrass research — specifically, through the development of lower-maintenance grasses and those that require less water. And, recognizing the reality of that fact, that is what much of today's turfgrass research focuses on.

And there's little disagreement through out the industry that this is a problem whose time is quickly approaching.

"In the next 10 to 20 years, there are going to be water shortages," said William Bengeyfield, head of the USGA Green Section. "The first people to be cut off will be golf courses, parks and recreation areas."

James Prusa, associate director of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, wonders why turfgrass research for golf courses has taken a back seat in the past. "Turfgrass research is the poor boy of agricultural research," he explained. "And fundamentally, golf is responsible for turfgrass research. Golf brought turfgrass research to where it is today. All of the major funding comes through golf. No other sport, really, has put money into turfgrass research.

"But when an advance is made, in any field, it helps everyone."

Why is the general public so seemingly unconcerned about the problems?

"If there is a weakness in turfgrass research, it's due to the golfer and the clubs," stated Dr. Richard Hurley, research director for Lofts Seeds, Inc. of Bound Brook, N.J. "Every golfer loves to go into the pro shop and talk golf with the pro. The only time a member talks about turf is in generalities. Never does the average member start a discussion on turf.

"Really, unless you're in the industry, it's a boring subject."

Dr. James Watson, vice president of The Toro Co. puts at least some of the blame on the turf industry. "We talk to ourselves and tell each other how important it (turfgrass research) is," he explained. "But we don't talk to our public. The average golfer has very little understanding of what goes into the maintenance of a golf green. As long as the grass is green and he shoots a low score, he's happy."

Like most things these days, money is the bottom line. And that money is going to have to come from a great many sources; private donations, commercial manufacturers and golf clubs themselves.

If there is a champion of the cause, it's the USGA's Green Section. Not only does the Green Section have the means to raise the most money, it also has the expertise to see that it's spent in a worthwhile manner.

In 1983, there was \$233,000 divied out by the Green Section to various turfgrass projects throughout the world. Last year, the figure reached \$386,000, and there will be even more alloted this year.

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