

Observations of Turf Problems — Spring 1986

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The primary problem observed on golf course turf this past spring has been winter kill which resulted from the unusual late fall and early winter weather we experienced in the upper midwest. Heavy rains in November were followed by severe cold spells in December. The excess rainfall led to "crown hydration," or excess water in coronal cells of plants. Subsequent hard freezes caused injury or death to these hydrated cells because of ice formation. **Poa annua** and bentgrass in low, wet areas of fairways and greens were most affected. Also severely affected was newly seeded stands of perennial rye.

Poa annua showed how much more susceptible it is than bentgrass to this type of winter injury, since on many courses the bents were much less damaged. Lack of snow cover we experienced later in the winter, coupled with freeze and thaw cycles this spring, contributed further to winter kill of **Poa**. Dessication of **Poa** on exposed sites was a common problem.

These often exasperating winter kill problems were further compounded by the dry, cool weather conditions this spring. Recovery from winter injury was slowed, and many grasses were late coming out of winter dormancy. Washington (and other South German types) and Penncross bent putting greens were slow to green up — most greens were thin and had that



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familiar dark blue or purple cast well into May. Early growth of bentgrasses was coarse with surface running of stems and stolons. Cool soil temperatures into May also caused **Poa annua** to remain off color, especially **Poa** trying to recover from winter injury. Fast green-speed management (low height of cut, low N, sand rootzones) may increase green-up topgrowth problems when spring weather is unfavorable.

Not much disease activity was observed this spring, primarily due to the cool, dry weather. Some common leaf spot and red leaf spot was observed on bentgrass greens. Leaf spot was more severe in bluegrass roughs and higher cut fairways where higher humidity was maintained in the canopy. Some pink snow mold occurred early this spring, but was infrequent and not very damaging. Snow molds usually occurred where fall fungicide applications were prevented or washed away by November rainfalls.

Diagnosis of Turf Problems

The diagnostic lab at Oak Brook is now ready to go. Disease diagnoses can be conducted by a visit from the trained plant pathologist (me), or by submission of samples directly to the lab (drop-off or mail-in). For submitted samples, certain information is useful to aid diagnosis and should be included. This information is as follows:

- identify the plant species affected, including cultivar name if known
- record the cultural conditions under which the grass is growing — include recent fertilizer or pesticide applications

(cont'd. page 7)

