

## Director's Column



*Don Cross, CGCS*

### Matching the Old to the New

While I pondered an article for this Directors Column I thought it would be appropriate to mention how much we all must have enjoyed the beautiful month of April. You know, the month when you can feel the gradual warming trend, see the daffodils and early flowering woody ornamentals in bloom, against a clear blue sky. Yeah right! I think we may have had seven days of sunshine and, if anything, a cooling trend. The meteorologists certainly had the "cooler near the lake" right. Thankfully it is all past us now and we can anticipate the challenges to come in the next few months.

We all have our own particular circumstances and challenges that we effectively address daily. One such challenge that I now have here at Skokie Country Club, (since reconstructing three greens and the practice green last year), is matching the consistency of the old greens to that of the new greens. The program we embarked upon began in late October 1990, ten months before the four greens were to be reconstructed.

We knew at that time the new greens would be USGA spec with an 80:20 rootzone mix and that this differed significantly from the soil and highly organic rootzones of the remaining greens. We also knew that the shot holding ability and the "feel" of the greens, when playing on them, would be different. So short of rebuilding all the greens we decided an aggressive coring and sand topdressing program, which will continue for several years, would be an appropriate solution. In time, enough sand would be incorporated to various depths within the existing rootzones, as well as immediately below the turf surface, to achieve the desired consistencies.

Our procedure started with contracting an aeration service company to verti-drain with 3/4" solid tines (hollow tines were tried but they quickly plugged up and caused unacceptable surface lifting) to depths of 12" and followed with 100% sand topdressing and broom dragging procedures. We then followed with standard hollow tine coring using 5/8" tines and topdressed and dragged again. At this point we had a nice number of holes and many were filled to the surface with sand, but not

all of them. I felt that what we had started was good but I was disappointed that we could not extract soil from deeper in the rootzone, and could not fill all the holes using standard topdressing practices. I decided that the Floyd-McKay drill might be worth a try and as long as we had the greens full of holes, a few more wouldn't hurt. So two weeks after the first two operations we contracted another aeration service company to drill all the greens.

The drilling went well using 3/4" bits on 4" centers to a depth of 10". All of the soil from each drill hole is not extracted, because of the flute design, and I would estimate that about 75% is removed. Complete removal would have been preferred but 75% was better than nothing. We followed with clean-up and sand topdressing again but this time we used a different method.

After observing a similar procedure at two other clubs we purchased kiln-dried sand and literally dumped the sand in a pile, beginning at one side of a green, and pushed it across using the backs of rakes and push brooms. The sand flowed like sand in an hourglass and completely filled all holes. I was convinced at the time that there may be other ways of topdressing but that there is not any more complete way.

We put the greens to bed that winter with a dormant fertilization, a winter disease protectant application, and covered them with evergreen greenscovers. Last Spring, after doing the cover-shuffle (cold nights on, warmer nights off) for a couple of weeks, the destruction had recovered.

In 1991 we followed a similar plan of core aerating in May and Sept., and drilling in late Oct., but did not verti-drain. In all cases we used the dried sand and hand brooming method of topdressing and added several conventional topdressings in between.

It's now a new year and a year and a half later. We now have much improvement in root growth and drainage in addition to a half inch of sand immediately below the turf surface, bringing all the old greens that much closer to being consistent with the new greens. We have a long way to go and we will continue to core and drill and/or verti-drain (with hollow tines if possible), but the process thus far has been very encouraging.

I have intentionally left out the costs of these various tasks and procedures (I've run on long enough) but if anyone is interested give me a call. Let's just say it is a lot less than rebuilding at a cost of 35-40K for a new USGA spec green.

### "Pandora's Box"

June's warmth aids Spring's Floral Parade,

To show a Golfing Summer's being made.

As the Golf Course reflects Nature's transition,

Of Spring to Summer Golfing condition.

Now to adjust, regulate, control Summer's stress,

Dancing to Summer's Tune, will be the test.

Exciting, a challenge, Our yearly chore,

Pandora's Box and a whole lot more.

**Kenneth R. Zanzig**