

Construction Underway On University of Illinois Experimental Green At Cantigny

by Tony Rzadzki, Supt., Cantigny Golf

As most of you know, the Chicagoland area superintendents have longed for a research test plot in our area, a place where we could use data closer to home rather than many miles south of here. Well, that is exactly what we are going to have.

Last September I was paid a visit by Dr. Randy Kane and Dr. Hank Wilkinson. They were both very excited and bubbling over with ideas and ambitions for this new project. We had talked about it earlier in the year, but this day seemed like the day that our project would be born and soon come to fruition. Expectations were so high that day that both the dear doctors had dreams that their green would have turf on it by late October! The excitement was contagious and I was beginning to slip into their euphoria ... then reality slid in when I asked one simple question, "Who is going to fund this operation?" Their bubble started to leak and the wind in their sails slowly dropped to a dead calm.

Today is June 30, 1993. After ten months of negotiating for money and a design, the University of Illinois Green is well underway. Cash and material donations have been promised by local turf grass organizations and businesses. As usual, Hank is running on a shoe string, but all indications look great for the completion of this project. Cantigny has contributed the space, yearly maintenance, and the construction of the green.

The University of Illinois Green is going to be built to USGA specifications and maintained just as intensively as all of our other putting greens. Every effort will be made to insure that the experimental green is comparative to other greens used for professional play.

The total size of the green will be 8,000 square feet. The green will be divided by impervious walls into four sections of 2,000 square feet. In each quadrant a different soil mix will be used to test the performance of various bent grass species on each plot.

Each quadrant will have one of the following soil mixes:

Quadrant 1. 80% sand - 20% peat

Quadrant 2. 100% sand

Quadrant 3. 70% sand - 10% peat - 20% calcined clay

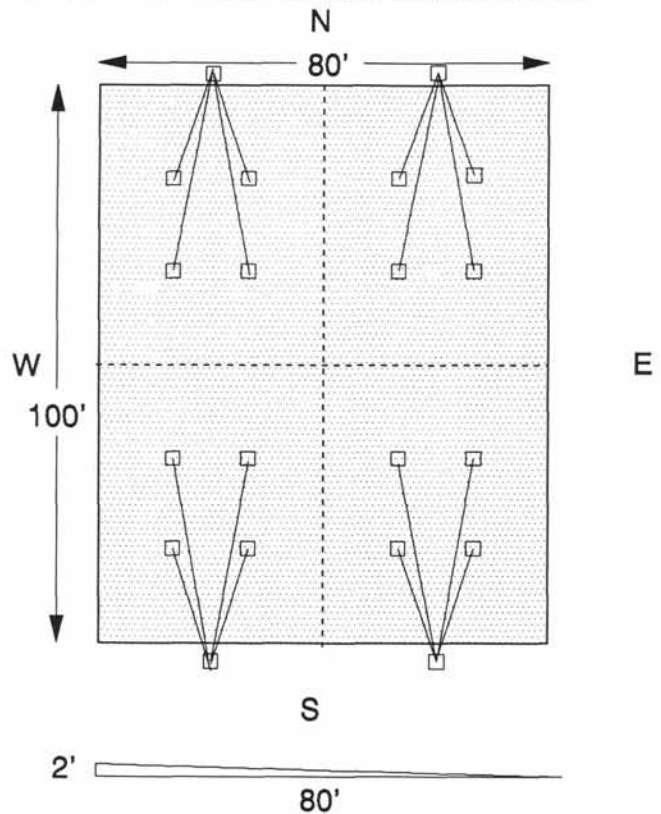
Quadrant 4. 80% sand - 20% calcined clay

Each quadrant will also have four collection 'pots' buried in the soil mix profile. These collectors will drain to sump basins outside of the green where the leachate water can be collected and analyzed. We are trying to measure the amount of water that leaches through each profile, the amount of potential binding of pesticides and fertilizers in each, and possibly through the information gathered, come up with recommendations for the reductions of pesticide and fertilizer usage in future greens construction.

On top of each quadrant various cultivars of bent grass will be planted and judged for performance on each soil mix. These cultivars may include the following; Putter, South Shore, SR 1020, Pennlinks, and others. Experiments will also be performed with pesticides and nutrients along with the basic maintenance practices that are performed daily.

CANTIGNY RESEARCH GREENS

GROUND WATER COLLECTION SYSTEM



This facility is being constructed to collect data for five years or longer. The site is near our maintenance facility and golf course fairways. It is readily accessible to visitors, and I welcome anyone who would like to come out and visit or donate some time.

It took ten months of planning and reality is finally setting in. The excitement that I felt for a while last year is blowing up my bubble right now and I know that it will not break. This is truly the most ambitious, exciting project that I have ever undertaken, and aside from all of the work involved, it is a lot of fun too.

If anyone has any questions about the University of Illinois Green, please feel free to call me or Randy Kane.



Tony setting grade stakes for the new experimental green.