

(A Tradition Ends continued)

Les Mach, Wayne Trometer, Harry Neilson, Jr., Ben Kronn, Ed Polheber and others will remain only that — a memory.

Unfortunately, as the old saying goes, "things change" and this wonderful tradition has come to its end. There was no party in 1993 or 1994. An older Adolph felt that it was time to end this tradition. And he was probably right, but this wonderful tradition will not be easily forgotten. Adolph says that in 1999, when he has reached 80 years of age, if he is still alive and if he can still do it, he will hold the 'grand-daddy' of all Christmas parties.

TIME FOR A CHANGE Revisiting Fairway Conversion

by R. Brian Green, C.G.C.S.
Sunset Valley G.C.

For many years I stood in defense of ryegrass fairways. However, the bentgrass conversions of the 80's kept my attention. Especially when fairways better than mine, like the excellent bluegrass fairways of Jim Evans at Turnberry received their dose of Round-Up. I rationalized my need to keep seeding ryegrass into our public fairways as cost efficient and the quickest way to continuously replace turf following the constant flooding of the Skokie River. 1994 marked the year for Sunset Valleys' time for a change.

Having seen the light, I proceeded to sell the program to the public, the golf advisory board, park board and to myself.

The following are **negatives** of ryegrass fairways.

- 1) **Perennial rye and winter hardiness**, always a concern. Nothing like 50% winterkill of fairways to get a season off to a hair raising start.
- 2) **Playability and appearance**. Flyers R' Us, our logo, consistent with the rapid upright growth habit. Also difficulty mowing at times will lead to shaggy fairway lies.
- 3) **Pythium loves ryegrass!** (This speaks for itself).

The **positive** influences for making the Change.

- 1) Fairways that were inferior in appearance and playability.
- 2) Purchase of lightweight mowers.
- 3) Plant growth regulators and Poa controls.
- 4) Golfers pressure of the public layouts old and new that have bentgrass fairways. Especially thanks to Kevin C. at Sportsmans and Jerry M. at Lake Bluff.
- 5) Improved bentgrass varieties.
- 6) Bentgrass has cool diseases. I wanted to see some Brown Patch as big as my truck.

Having seen the light, I proceeded to sell the program to the public, the golf advisory board, park board and to myself. The idea was well received until I told them about roping the fairways from August 1, 1994 thru the Spring of 1995. My plan was to convert nine holes in 1994 and finish the remainder in conjunction with a major renovation in 1995. Golfers were informed of all the plans one year in advance.

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(Time for a Change continued)

Next, I tapped into our greatest wealth of information — **the golf professional**. Just kidding! I called my fellow superintendents that have completed fairway conversions. Many thanks to all these outstanding gentlemen for their generous sharing of experiences, and their - "if I had to do it over agains". These men were Jerry Machs, Don Cross, Jim Evans, Joel Purpur, Oscar Miles, and Dave Schlagetter. Also Dr. Randy Kane offered his expertise on seed selection. They helped me form my plan listed below.

A to Z Bentgrass Conversion Plan

- A) Seed selection and reserve quantity. (1/3 PennEagle, 1/3 SR 1019, and 1/3 SR 1020).
- B) Soil testing and nutrient adjustments.
- C) Irrigation testing - performance and coverage.
- D) Contouring - architect assistance.
- E) Tree moving - in relation to new contours.
- F) Soil leveling - fill depressions, drain line, etc.
- G) Equipment acquisition - beg, borrow, steal extra seeders and tractors. Thanks Craig J, Jerry M. and Kevin C.
- H) Maintain normal soil moisture.
- I) Aerate with 5/8" tines. Leave approach areas undisturbed.
- J) Drill seed in three directions - .5 lb/M each direction.
- K) Roll fairways.
- L) Drag fairways.
- M) Blow fairways and sweep-up debris from rough.
- N) Stake and rope fairways entirely leaving only the approach.
- O) Apply Round-Up after the last players of the day - 11 p.m.
- P) Wash off Round-Up with heavy irrigation and injecting Aqua-Gro. before first players - 5 a.m.
- Q) Apply starter fertilizer - .5lb/N - .75 lb/P.
- R) **KEEP SEED MOIST!!**
- S) 2-3 days after seeding - Spray Subdue - 1.5 oz/M.
- T) 1st mowing within seven days.
- U) Observe how well you sprayed the Round-Up in the dark.
- V) Soluble fertilizer and fungicide application (20-20-20, Fore)
- W) Mowing 5/8" alternate days.
- X) Soil and seed weak, thin areas.
- Z) **EXPLAIN! UPDATE! NOTIFY! INFORM!** (PR skills will be needed beyond your wildest dreams.)

We allowed play at all times on the fairways, but no cart traffic until sufficient grow-in. With such a terrific growing season we were able to take down the ropes and allow traffic by Oct. 15, only 10 weeks after seeding. Our players were impressed by the quality of the work and the speed of the recovery, but complained anyways.

This successful program has us looking forward to the second phase in 1995 with very little adjustments to this plan.

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