



Speed Kills

Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in the spring 2002 issue of The Florida Green, newsletter of the Florida GCSA.

When I was a young lad of about 10, I watched a movie about the Indianapolis Speedway and the Big Race held there each year. It starred William Bendix, who played the part of "Burn 'em Up" Barnes. Needless to say, old "Burn 'em Up" slammed into the wall and expired amid the wreckage and twisted metal near turn two . . . or three . . . or one of those turns. Funny how that movie stayed with me all these years, but it has. The moral of the story, obviously, was "speed kills."

I think the time has long since passed that the USGA and particularly the GCSAA began aggressive education to the masses that the green speed they see on TV every week is not what they should expect from their clubs on a regular basis.

Last April, my wife and I had the opportunity to get up close and personal with Daytona International Speedway, thanks to her ex-husband, with whom she has remained cordial. Bruce is an architect working for the France Company, which owns the Daytona Track and several others across the country. He took us on quite a tour of the facility, but the most compelling part of the excursion was almost being able to touch the wall in turn three where Dale Earnhart, "The Intimidator," had bought it just a couple of months before. Moral of the story: "Speed kills."

In case you were wondering what the hell a bunch of people going around in circles at 180 miles per hour has to do with turf, it is that speed kills.

I have seen too many good superintendents lose jobs because their greens took a dump as they tried to maintain them at speeds of 10, 11 or 12 on the stimpmeter. This quest to have the fastest greens in town is taking a toll, and it seems to me that it is all so needless.

Now don't get me wrong, I'm not someone who putts badly on fast greens and has a personal axe to grind. As a matter of fact, the faster they are, the better I like it. This fact can be verified by any number of people whose socks I've knocked the dust out of. Putting on fast greens brings out the Jerry Maguire in me.

But enough is too much already! A stimp of 8.0 or 9.0 is plenty fast enough and leaves the plant sufficient leaf tissue to accommodate photosynthe-

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sis. Furthermore, there doesn't seem to be a loss of root mass at these speeds. With products like Primo, around 8.0 on well-shaped greens is more than what 90% of golfers can handle. I know it's one of the main reasons play has slowed down. The greens are too fast and all these pork chops are chipping from one side of the green to the other and following that up with three or four putts.

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I wish I had kept the article in *GolfWeek's Superintendent News*, which alluded to the fact that the greens on three of the last four U.S. Open courses had to be replanted immediately after the event because

they had gotten so stressed out during tournament week.

That's the part of the story the golfing public never hears. "Speed kills" is the part of the story our industry, and the people to whom we have entrusted our profession, need to begin preaching. Slow 'em down!

I know that this commentary will be read by some folks at big-time clubs and be laughed at, but not everyone has a million-dollar budget and a staff of 20 or more for each 18 holes.

Come on, USGA! Come on, GCSAA! Get on board and come on in for the victory lap, or else we'll have you standing tall before the Man.

Start telling the masses: "Speed kills!"



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