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President's Message

I've just finished my stint as host of the MAGCS hospitality tent at the Western Open and figured I'd jot down some of my thoughts.

First, I worked what I consider the graveyard shift — that's Sunday morning. The only players on the course are the ones that are twenty-three strokes off the pace and when you watch them play one wonders how they got that close. This is also before most superintendents are able to leave their courses for the day.

Even taking these things into consideration I still felt we had a successful morning and a very successful week at Butler. For those of you who could not make it out, this year's tent was in a nice location between the second and seventh holes where there was a lot of traffic. It was also near Oscar's maintenance building, making it very convenient for storing all our beverages and props.

Bruce Williams did an excellent job setting things up and he had a nice video tape from GCSAA promoting the profession of golf course superintendents. While I was there several people, including a member of Butler, came by and viewed the entire tape.

As usual Oscar was very busy and I did not get a chance to talk to him very long, but he indicated he was glad the ten months he'd spent reestablishing the turf lost in last year's flood was over. My congratulations to Oscar and his crew for getting the course back in tournament condition in such a short period of time.

You'll notice I haven't mentioned anything about the great drought of 1988. I'm just hoping that between the time this is written and the time it is mailed that the drought will be only a bad memory.

Mike Nass

TOASTED TURF

*Though the brown grass crackles on the ground,
A live spark glows in its crown.
Wanting for a rainy day,
Even a thunder storm, to pass its way,
While the hot breath of summer,
In the dry winds that sere,
Seek a new destination, never to reappear.*

Kenneth R. Zanzig

Pictures from the "Beatrice Western Open" at Butler National Golf Club



OSCAR WINS THE "OSCAR"

Oscar Miles, superintendent at Butler National Golf Club in Oak Brook was recently honored with the Midwest Association's prestigious "Charles Bartlett Award."

The award is in memory of Charles Bartlett, hall of fame golf writer for the Chicago Tribune. Bartlett was sympathetic with the hassle of golf course superintendents; coping with the whims of club members and mother nature. Superintendents MUST delegate the mowing chores, and be more visible and listened to by the golfers. Writing magazine articles and some public speaking engagements can only help the greenkeepers stature.

Since the Bartlett Award inception in 1967, its winners have included Paul Voykin, Oscar Miles, Norm Kramer, Ray Gerber, Bob Williams, Julius Albaugh, and Ken Zanzig.

Considering the most recent Western Open Championships at Butler National, winners names like Verplank, Wiebring, and Benepe may soon be forgotten, but Oscar is the name on everyone's tongue. In 1987 mother nature tried, but failed, to wash out the event. Television cameras showed grounds crew with squeegees pushing silt back into Salt Creek. Helicopters were flown in to increase evaporation. "Water Hogs" were imported from Florida to soak up surface water. Play was resumed.

Never has a local superintendent held press conferences, been quoted daily in all the newspapers, and had prime time television coverage keeping the golf world aware of course conditions and the plight of a dedicated superintendent.

In less than one year, the touring professionals claimed Butler National is the finest conditioned golf course they have played on.

We, the Midwest members, congratulate and thank you Oscar for the way you handled the media and promoted our profession. Charlie Bartlett would be very proud of you.

Dudley Smith,
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Facts and Fallacies of Fast Greens

by James T. Snow, Director
Northeastern Region USGA Green Section

In retrospect, the introduction of the Stimpmeter by the USGA in 1976 foreshadowed major changes for the way golf courses are maintained and for the way the game itself is played. By enabling golf course superintendents to easily determine the speed of greens, the Stimpmeter has greatly expanded our understanding of how maintenance practices can be manipulated to control green speed. As a result, golfers at every level throughout the country are enjoying faster, truer putting surfaces on a day to day basis than ever before.

While their greens have been fast and smooth, however, the road that the superintendent has been forced to accommodate these changes has occasionally been slow and bumpy. Interested but uninformed golfers and club officials have placed heavy pressure on the superintendent to produce consistently ultrafast greens at their courses, testing the limits of the health of the turf and sometimes pushing it over the edge. Along the way, rumors and misinformation have pervaded every locker room with respect to how fast the greens should be, how to get them that way, and what might happen if they're pushed too hard.

One of the indisputable facts today is that greens are generally faster than they were only a few years ago. A national survey done by the USGA Green section in 1976 showed that the average green rolled approximately 6 feet 6 inches according to the Stimpmeter, whereas the average green today is probably closer to 8 feet. It's also a fact that most golfers have short memories. Though greens are faster than ever, complaints about slow greens are more common than ever.

So how fast is fast? In my view, the following offers a reasonable perspective on the subject.

- Fast for regular play 8' to 9'
- A reasonable range, 7'6" to 9'
- Ultra-fast for regular play, above 9'6"
- An unreasonable range, above 9' at all times

Due to the vagaries of the weather and other circumstances, it is impossible to maintain a precise green speed throughout the year, but maintaining speeds between 7'6" and 9' should be feasible. Speeds of 9' should be established only for special occasions. Trying to keep green speeds above 9' at all times, as desired by some golfers, often results in serious problems and should be avoided.

Paying the Piper

Achieving fast greens has been well studied and involved proper mower maintenance and adjustment along with the manipulation of cultural factors such as fertilization, irrigation, topdressing, verticutting, rolling, etc. To achieve ultra-fast greens, all of these programs must be pushed to the limit. In the process, extreme stress is placed on the turf and jeopardizes its very survival during periods of difficult weather. If a goal of maintaining fast or ultra-fast greens throughout the season is ever to be achieved, then a real effort must be made to control or minimize other stress factors as much as possible.

These include:

- poor drainage

(continued on page 6)

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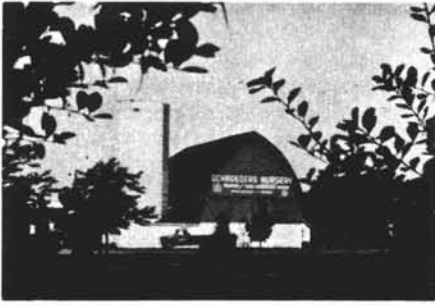
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FAST GREENS

(continued from page 4)

- moisture stress due to a poor irrigation system or improper irrigation practices
- soil compaction
- diseases, insects and nematodes
- unreasonable traffic (e.g., play during bad weather, winter play, etc.)
- tree effects (shade, root competition, poor air circulation)

Despite efforts to control these stress factors, however, following through with all of the practices necessary to produce consistently fast or ultra-fast greens can thin and weaken the turf to such an extent that many undesirable consequences can occur. Among the problems observed:

- establishment of moss and algae
- encroachment of crabgrass, goosegrass and other weeds
- proliferation of summer patch, take-all patch and other difficult to control stress related diseases

Trying to maintain consistently ultra-fast greens means always living on the edge of disaster, and once golfers become used to these fast greens, they expect them to be that way all of the time. The superintendent is then locked into a maintenance program which at best will make him a nervous wreck, but which ultimately could spell disaster. In the end, the piper will be paid!

Recommendations

- Try to keep the speed of your greens in the reasonable range of 7'6" to 9'. Aim for the 8' to 9' range if you wish but recognize that green speeds will vary from day to day and season to season.
- Avoid getting caught up in the race for ultrafast greens, striving for speeds of 9'6" only on very special occasions, if at all.
- Explain to your club officials about the potential consequences of trying to maintain consistently ultra-fast greens.
- Be on the lookout for the symptoms of weakness noted earlier, and be prepared to compromise your green speed goals in an effort to strengthen the turf.

In the long run, the game of golf will be best served by taking a reasonable approach to managing green speeds, avoiding the excesses which can only result in dead grass and unhappy golfers.

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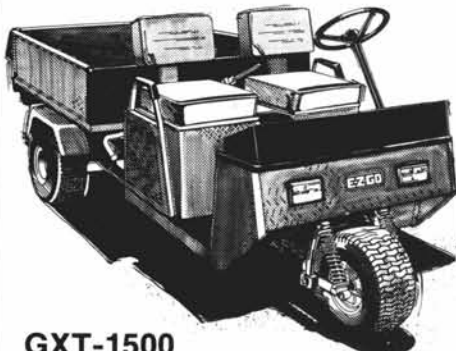
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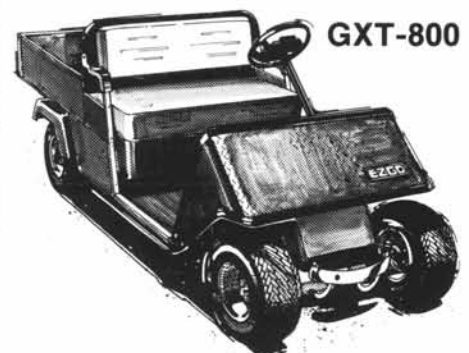
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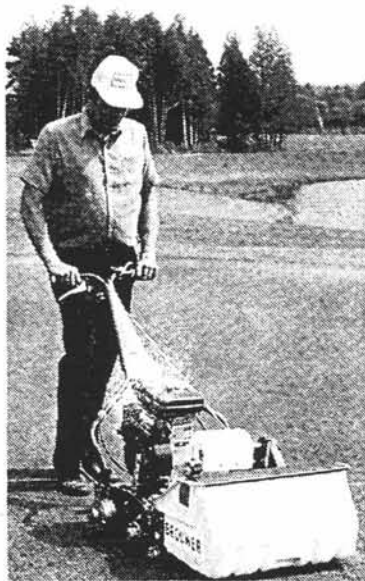


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GROOMING REEL GUIDE

by Helmut Ullrich, The Toro Company

1. Introduction

As you know, grooming is an old technique, but the "groomer" is relatively new. It is associated with the golfer's desire for faster, truer and healthier greens. There has been much discussion among superintendents, and articles have been written in trade publications concerning the actual benefits this tool provides. Because this management practice is so new, there has been little, if any, scientific research conducted to determine the long-term effects of grooming. It is difficult, therefore, to make precise recommendations on the use of a grooming reel. This is further complicated by the many variables which play a major role in achieving desired results. Some of the variables which must be considered are:

- General condition of the green
- Variety of grass on the green
- Season of the year
- The turf-management program
- Variation in traffic
- Stress periods, especially heat and humidity

All of these vary from golf course to golf course, and usually from green to green on the same course. The use of the grooming reel, therefore, requires a thorough understanding of agronomic aspects of the turf on the green which, in turn, determines the depth of setting and the frequency of use. It is recommended strongly that the superintendents experiment S-L-O-W-L-Y to achieve best results.

- Grooming, in essence, removes more leaf area.
- Grooming provides some of the same benefits as verti-cutting. The main difference is that the cutting blades are spaced closer than on traditional verti-cutters, and the grooming reel is used more frequently.
- The more frequent use removes more grass and helps to control thatch build-up, especially during periods of maximum growth. For this reason, care must be exercised during periods when grass growth is reduced — for whatever reason.
- Grooming, in addition to routine turf management techniques, like aerification and topdressing, may permit one to raise the mowing height without sacrificing green speed.
- By maintaining a higher cutting height, the effective rooting depth of the turfgrass is increased and the grass is in a more healthy state. Also, it is better able to withstand wear, as well as environmental stresses.

2. What a Grooming Reel Does Not Do

- Grooming is not verti-cutting in the traditional sense; it is for the use above soil level. It is similar to light verti-cutting. It provides for a frequent cutting of those elements that contribute to grain.
- Grooming has the potential to replace verti-cutting, depending on the overall management program.
- Verti-cutting will continue to be used for deeper penetration into the soil, for renovation purposes or preparation of overseeding.
- Grooming does not necessarily achieve, in all cases, increased ball speed. Ball speed is dependent on other factors, i.e., height of cut, frequency of cut, the number of daily mowings, health of turf, grass variety, etc. Some of these factors may make a bigger impact on ball roll than grooming itself.

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(continued on page 14)

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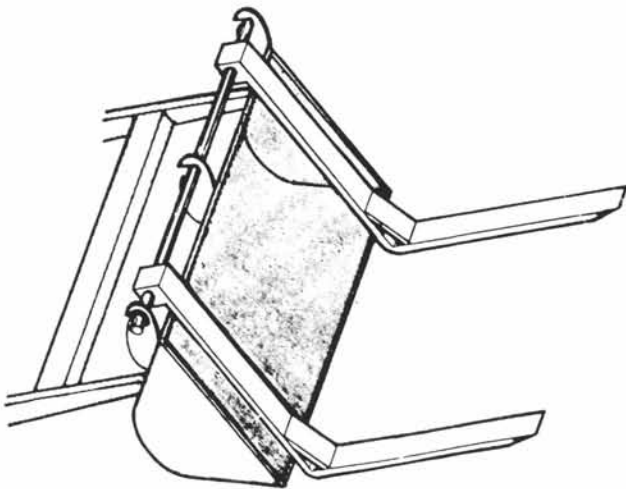
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SOIL FOR TURF FACILITIES

by Dr. Gene C. Nutter, Agronomist

In the operation of modern turf-grass facilities, more problems are caused by improper physical condition of soil than probably any other single factor. While other symptoms may be more readily recognized and treated (such as disease, compaction, poor aeration, weeds or fertility problems), the real and underlying cause is usually poor soil physical conditions. It is time that we recognize this basic fact so that we can begin to cure the real problem and stop the never-ending, expensive job of just treating the symptoms.

True, most superintendents and managers of turf facilities inherit their soil problems. How sad it is, however, to see the great number of new facilities (including expensive and complicated golf course greens) that still ignore the importance of proper soil conditions, including surface and internal drainage, soil preparation, and use of amendments and soil conditioning. Certainly there is enough information available to guide the planners and contractors of these jobs in this age of technology.

Why, then, does our industry continue to make these inexcusable and expensive mistakes? As long as we continue to follow this course of extravagant ignorance, we will be burying our heads further in the sand instead of advancing our individual courses, our profession and our industry image.

What are the basic aspects of soil management that seem to be so often overlooked or ignored? First, let us consider the origin of soil.

Soil Origin

In its natural condition, soil is a complex mixture of mineral fragments, decayed plant residues and microscopic organisms. Each of these classes of ingredients have their influence on the nature of the soil. As a natural body, soil developed through a constantly changing pattern which was greatly dependent upon environmental conditions such as temperature, rainfall, plant life and location.

For the majority of cases, the native soil is most influenced by the mineral fraction (called parent material). These soils are called mineral soils. Parent material may have developed from underlying rock formation, or been transported by ice (glacial soils) or water. Thus, soils which developed from rocks through the age-long process of weathering will have properties akin to those kinds of rock. Examples are the heavier, more complex mineral soils such as clays. Usually these soils are more difficult to manage physically (poor internal drainage and aeration) but are richer in fertility potential (will hold more nutrients).

On the other hand, soils which were laid down from water deposits — such as sands, would reflect a lighter, simpler structure. These soils (such as our various Florida sands) are easier to manage physically (better drainage and aeration) but have much lower fertility capacity.

Then there are organic soils, derived from decayed plant residues. These are the muck soils of the rich Everglades region, and the peat deposits scattered around the state.

(continued on page 11)

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