

TOP DRESSING

By EARL GREY
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As our teeth chattered at 6:30 A.M. January 13, 1979 the reality of the weatherman's forecast two days prior was now present! The thermometer now registered 43° as compared to 75° just the day before.

Forehand knowledge of the probable weather we were about to experience motivated us to finalize our last minute details for topdressing all 18 greens as well as our practice putting green.

The night before we were to get started we loaded a truck full of 70% sand 30% muck sterilized. This we parked inside the maintenance building to insure dry topdressing and also for a cleaner operation. We additionally prepared our top dressing machine, truckster, dragmat, shovels, etc. so that we could move quickly to the operation site immediately the next morning.

Before we charge No. 1 green it would be good to note that we had been foliage feeding our Tifton Dwarf Greens with 6'N-12'Fe-6'Sul at 15 lbs per acre in 125 gallons of water every 5 to 7 days. The roots had been receiving a steady diet of 17-2-7 I.B.D.U. 5% quick release at 2 lbs act nitrogen per 1,000 sq. ft. every four weeks. This formula was sufficient considering the erratic weather we were experiencing the past 30-45 days. We were also topdressing every 14-20 days at one yard mix per 5,000 sq. ft. with an automatic topdressing machine.

Until Jan 3rd our greens were still growing but a more severe test was to be dealt with this day with 43° looming over the course. Another unique feature about this chilly morning was that everyone had this undying love for hot coffee which could be observed by the reluctance to leave it and to join the cold outside!

We closed in on green #1 quickly and in 10 minutes at 6:50 A.M. #1 was topdressed. We then tied our spreader to the utility vehicle for faster transport and proceeded to green #2. With time being foremost at 7:50 A.M. we sent a man with the utility wagon (when not being needed) to green ÷ 1 to finish dragging in the soil. Immediately behind him followed a triplex greensmower with baskets to help clean any debris left over on the green. And at 8:05 A.M. our first green was ready for play and we allowed one full hour for drying.

The program was completed by working through lunch to 1 P.M. We were able to avoid play. Our greens average 6,500 sq. ft.

The next mornings temperature read 53° and a warming trend followed. A day later we observed that the course had lost some vibrance, but our greens held their color and growth pattern! We attribute this continued growth on our Tifton Greens in part to the sweater-like approach topdressing has, partly covering and warming them in the cold winter months.

TOP DRESSING DURING HEAVY WINTER PLAY

MINI TIPS TO SPEED TOPDRESSING PROCEDURE DURING PLAY:

- A. Greens should be as dry as possible! Irrigating early the night before or not at all is best! This will make the operation a cleaner one.
- B. Load dry topdressing on a truck and park it inside a covered building to insure dry dressing and save morning loading time.
- C. Begin operation in the center of green in a circular fashion and work toward outside edge to avoid driving over dressing which may clump and prevent or slow drying.
- D. For speedier traveling, transport power top dresser with utility wagon between greens.



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