

Treasure Coast "Tide"ings

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Topdressing greens along the Treasure Coast has become the most important aspect of golf management that insures a true smooth putting surface and suitable soil characteristics. With the exception of more emphasis on using the correct material for a specific circumstance, the art and science of topdressing hasn't changed drastically over the years.

Many area superintendents have initiated a sand only topdressing program to balance the high percentage of organic material found in their greens. Chuck Calhoun of John's Island, Clarence Fleming of Dodgertown, Bill Mangold of Crane Creek, and Dave Bertholf of Miles Grant have all reported of using sand only for topdressing greens coupled with frequent aeration to alleviate drainage problems in the greens found at their courses. Bill Mangold commented that the greens at Crane Creek were built with 100% muck and grew more algae than grass during periods of wet weather. After three years of topdressing with sand, Bill has noticed great improvement in the overall condition of his greens.

For the supers who have adequate percolation (3"-6"/hr.), a prepared topdressing with a high percentage (70%-90%) of sand is used. The balance of the blend is of organic material, usually peat or muck. Most superintendents agree that a small amount of organic material is essential for water retention. After last year's drought, only problem greens along the Treasure Coast are receiving 100% sand as a topdressing medium.

One of the easiest ways of topdressing greens seems to have been almost abandoned in our area. The practice of verticutting cores and then dragging the soil back over

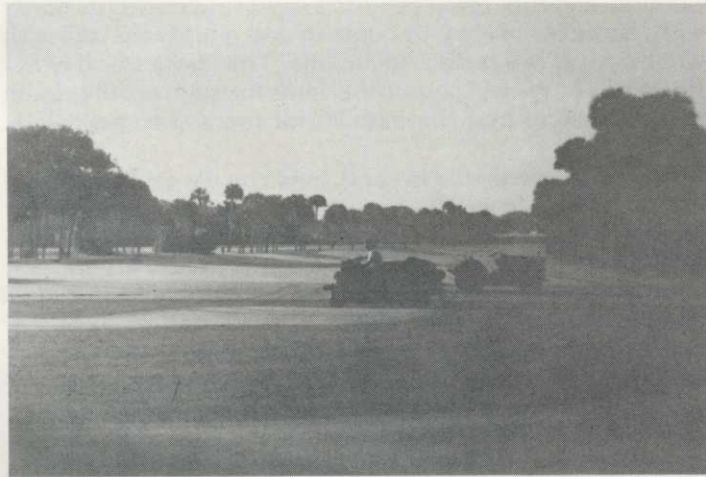
the putting surface is believed by some to have an adverse effect when working with hybrid bermudagrass. Although this practice as advantageous as far as using similar soil material for topdressing, it is in fact transplanting any mutation or contaminant grasses that may be present in the green. Under the high intensity of maintenance, chances are that a mutant sprig from a shredded core replanted in another aerifier hole WILL SURVIVE. The time saved in topdressing is not worth the future headaches when one continues to move undesirable grasses around on his greens.

A trend towards frequent topdressing during the year has become evident in the three county area. Adam Yurigan, Jr. of the John's Island Club in Vero Beach stated that he rarely goes more than eight weeks without topdressing. And during the winter months, overseeded greens are topdressed every four weeks. Ross Saylor, Golf Course Superintendent of Stuart Yacht and Country Club, reported that his greens are topdressed EVERY WEEK. Ross stated that this practice ensures quality putting conditions and eliminates undesirable thatch build-up.

Topdressing has proven to be a useful tool in correcting undesirable soil characteristics, reducing thatch build-up, rejuvenating sparse turf, and providing a billiard table surface on putting greens. Treasure Coast supers have carefully selected the topdressing program suited to their individual circumstance and plan to stick with it. For they realize that changing materials creates layers that impede air, water and roots. Layers may cost one his turf and also his job. ■



Getting an early morning start on topdressing greens at Riomar Country Club, Vero Beach.



Modern equipment has greatly reduced time required to topdress greens.