

DIVOTS

By **EDDIE SNIPES**
San Jose Country Club



Top Dressing, "She ain't what she used to be."

The Golf Course at San Jose Country Club located in Jacksonville, Florida has a very long and rich history. The present 18 hole course was completed in 1927 by golf course architect Donald B. Ross. The semi-private course was used by guests that stayed at the San Jose Hotel. The hotel was situated one-half mile away from the clubhouse and set on a bluff overlooking the St. Johns River. The hotel now houses Bolles High School. The club was officially chartered in 1947 and went to private membership status.

What in the blue blazes does this have to do with top dressing greens one may ask? The 55 year growth of San Jose Country Club and the practice of top dressing run the same continuum. Top dressing did not begin to blossom as a potential maintenance practice until the 40's.



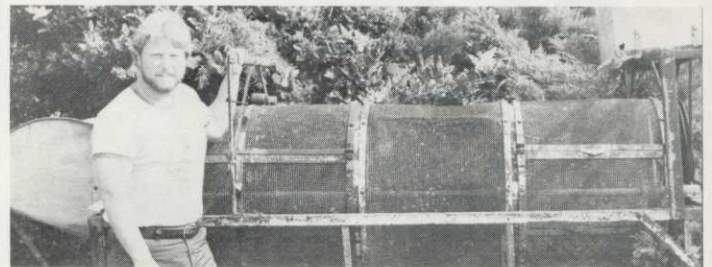
During this time at San Jose, top dressing was carried out with shovels and several men to distribute the top dressing material. This mode of operation was costly and time consuming. Top dressing procedures and San Jose Country Club at this time were in their infancy. One might speculate that in the 40's superintendents did not realize the full benefits of top dressing.

Today Dr. James Beard tells us that top dressing is utilized for (a) thatch control, (b) smoothing or leveling a turfgrass surface, (c) modification of the surface soil, (d) covering stolons or springs of vegetative plantings, (e) winter protection of turfs (Beard 73).



With the advent of a walking mechanized top dresser, the frequency and cost of top dressing became less and its benefits more obvious at San Jose. The greens are historical reminders of different superintendents philosophies on top dressing. Each layer of different soil in green plugs samples is evidence of their tenure at San Jose.

Today it is recommended that top dressing material be of the same consistency as the greens. This will help to prevent layering in the soil which allows for poor water and air distribution in the soil.



Top dressing used to be "homemade" at San Jose in a giant mixer. This mixer is now an artifact of days gone by. Today we buy treated (disease and weed free) material for our top dressing. The cost is far less to San Jose this way, in quality of material and in the man power it would take doing the operation ourselves.



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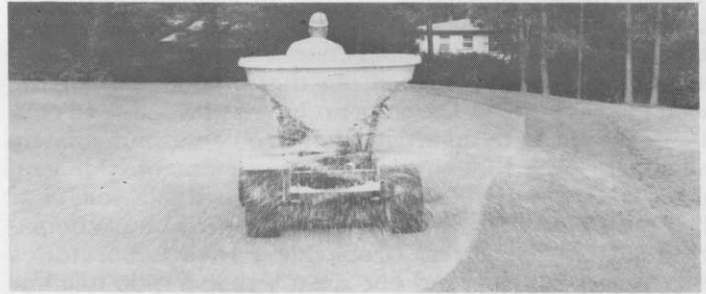
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Progress in the practice of top dressing at San Jose has now reached the state of the art. A maintenance practice that once took several men two to three days to accomplish can now be achieved in three hours by one man. The motorized riding top dresser with a 1,000 pound spreader attachment has brought greater speed, quality and efficiency to our top dressing program that will now increase in occurrence.



The present literature on top dressing points to many benefits that will help cut maintenance costs. Less disease, faster renewal of growth, less aerifying and better percolation are benefits that will save chemical, man power, and water expenses.

Top dressing practices at San Jose Country Club over the last 55 years have gone through different phases of development along with overall club development. It is progress made in our profession as in the practice of top dressing that helps us to do a better job for the members we work for and to enhance our professional capabilities.



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