



West Coast Buccaneers



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What is a good putting surface? Fast greens or slow, full greens or thin? The answer lies with each particular club and its particular type of membership.

The average golfer at our club is a higher handicap player who prefers a green with medium speed. All golfers demand as smooth a putting surface as you can give them and also want their shots to hold.

To maintain a good putting surface for our golfers, we have set up a general schedule of mowing, verticutting, aerating and top dressing, which will keep the putting surface as consistent as possible.

Mowing practices play a very important part for the putting surface. Changing the direction of cut each day insures a smooth surface plus it helps to reduce grain in the green. We use "Wiehle rollers", which we feel give us a true height of cut while reducing grain. We use these type of rollers on both front and rear of our greensmower reels. Height of cut contributes a great deal to the putting surface, and we have found that cutting at 3/16" during the most of the year seems to satisfy most golfers. The only change would be during the coldest months, we raise the cut to 1/4" then to protect the overseeding.

Verticutting is another must practice for a good putting surface plus healthy grass. Initially we tried a severe verticutting in the spring and again in the fall and a few light ones in between, however time has shown us that we get just as good results verticutting lightly each week with the exception of December, January and February. Usually we only verticut one way each time, however, if we see thatch building up we'll go two ways.

Aerating is what I consider a sometimes necessary evil. We aerate only when it's necessary (the greens are com-

pacted). We have in the past gone as much as a year between aerating. We are fortunate that our greens are made up of phosphate overlay, which is a very coarse sandy substance. They drain very quickly and are excellent for holding a shot. Their only drawback is the high phosphate content and high PH. With as much rain and traffic as we had this past winter season, we will have to aerate this spring. That's the one combination that will pack our soil. I called it a necessary evil because there are drawbacks to the operation. Each time you bring up soil from below the surface you also bring up some weed seeds, although this is more noticeable when fairways are aerated, it does happen sometimes on the greens. Although there are many good chemicals on the market to control weeds etc, irregardless of what the labels say, there is always an effect on the grass itself, whether it shows up now as a slight tip burn or shows up later in a poor root system, we try to use as little chemical control on the greens as we possibly can. Even if it comes to hand picking a weed here and there occasionally.

Topdressing has become a regular weekly routine along with the light verticutting. It used to be a very time consuming operation, tying up two or three employees for two days each time. That was when we used the walking type topdresser. With the advent of fertilizer spreaders turned top dressers, one employee can lightly topdress all our greens in two hours doing all the loading and spreading himself. This has also eliminated the need to drag the topdressing in afterwards, as turning the irrigation on for about five minutes takes care of that. The beauty of this equipment is that you can topdress as heavy or light as you desire to fit the circumstances and it still saves time and money on labor.

As was stated at the beginning of this article, a good putting surface depends on what individual clubs want. ■



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