

Watching Your Tees & Q's

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Traffic Control

Golfers everywhere, on greens, in lakes, climbing trees, and so thick on the first tee that you can't even see the grass. The only way to herd this kind of traffic is to give clear directions on where to point their golf carts.

Florida golf course superintendents have become the experts on traffic control. There are several tricks of the trade presently being used. Each one has advantages and disadvantages.

The old white line trick has been very successful at private country clubs. This involves painting a white line across the fairway near the apron of the green. The objective is to let the golf carts travel up to but not beyond the white line. After the paint wears and can no longer be seen, a new line is painted in a different area. This system works well but is often weakened by lack of communications between the golfers and the clubhouse. During the time the paint is disappearing; so is the turfgrass on the fairway side of the white line.

A more movable line involving the use of a rope line has been successfully used by one superintendent. The rope is stretched between two cart directional signs along the ground. This kind of line is extremely mobile but it does become an object of interference for those one in a million golf balls. For this reason, use a small nylon rope, and the mobility will probably outway any golf ball interference. Whenever lines are used, the use of directional signs should always accompany them.

The most obvious traffic patterns will be visible near greens and tees. Golf cart trails should be wisely placed during construction to be accessible to foot traffic onto and off greens and tees. Installation of curbing whether concrete, railroad ties, or fallen tree trunks have saved many acres of turfgrass from being bruised by tires at parking spaces next to tees. The use of railroad ties has even been used as the stair stepped slope on the number one tee on a local golf course. At times, there are as many as twenty people seen standing on this railroad tie slope.

Of course bruising the turfgrass shoots isn't the only type of wear stress by golf traffic. The other is compaction of the root system. The use of above ground ropes will still be necessary on wet areas to avoid compaction and tire tracking. When ropes and stakes are used, select yellow for high visibility. Ropes and stakes become a golf club liability and are subject to rare cases of golf player injury. Sun roof supports on golf carts can act as bumpers against ropes and stakes.

Golf course rangers can be used very effectively to monitor golf traffic patterns. Keep communications open for daily conference on where golf cart problems are visually seen. Communications are a two way street, so educate the marshalls on some turf physiology involving wear stress.

Appreciation for traffic management tools should also be shared with the club member and guests as well. Explain that bermudagrass selections of Ormond, Tifway and Texturf 10 have been evaluated in wear stress studies among the southern universities and have ranked highest for wear tolerance among 25 other selections. Let them realize that perennial ryegrasses are the most wear tolerant species of cool season turfgrasses commonly used for winter overseeding. Of these, there are several selections which have shown more wear tolerance than others. Your selection of an overseeding surface might have been based on wear tolerance after studying progress reports among the universities, so let your membership or management team know this.

As our northern guests play golf on putting surfaces slower than those on their home courses, they often wonder why they don't have ball roll speeds similar to those of the U.S. Open. Again, from the golf pro to the shine boy, they need to know that raising the mowing height of the putting greens can have a statistical difference in wear tolerance.

So you don't have to have bright colored signs to direct traffic and manage turfgrass under high traffic conditions, all you have to have is common sense and the gift of communications. ■



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