

The Art of Aerifying

By: Rich Roth

It's that time of year when most, if not all, Superintendents get geared up for their spring aerifying programs, some have already begun. It's also time to get out the antacids to relieve an ulcer, which if you don't have already you will probably develop real soon! Between the Membership's only not accepting but not understanding why you're punching those holes all over the course, you also can be guaranteed of your machinery going haywire during the course of your operations. I'd like to discuss the aerifying of greens and the three different techniques I've seen used on courses that I've been associated with.

The first course was in Tamarac, Florida. Ken Nicholson was the Superintendent at The Woodlands Golf Club and his procedure was as follows: Ken utilized a Dedoes Aerifier attached to a cushman truckster. Since the Dedoes aerifys and picks up the plugs and the operator

goes to a given area to dump the plugs to be used in areas where hopefully they will grow, the cost for man power is much less than aerifying with the Ryan Greensaire II's. But the penetration of the tines is not as good as with the Ryan's, which Ken did utilize on his most compacted greens.

At Boca Pointe Country Club in Boca Raton, Florida, Bill Jeffreys techniques was completely different. This year I understand he is using the solid hardened tines. But during the time when I was there we aerified the greens with two Ryan Greensaire II's. This operation is more time consuming than with the Dedoes and more man power is required to clean up the greens, but it gives the quality results that Bill strives for. Since the plugs are left on the green, you have to remove them. This requires three men to do the following: One to verti-cut the plugs, one to vacuum the plugs and one to mow the greens plus the two men who are running the aerifiers. All this is taken place before you can think about topdressing the greens. The only drawback to using the vacuum was that in the morning the plugs were moist and difficult to pick up, but by 10:00 or so they dried within the time it took to go from 1 green to another.

Now as Glen Klauks, Assistant at Delray Dunes Golf & Country Club in Boynton Beach, Florida, a third technique will be discussed. Just like Bill's method at Boca Pointe, two Ryan Greensaires are used, one which should be in the Smithsonian Institute!!! The cleaning up procedure is much more time consuming than either of the other two ways I've already mentioned. The plugs are removed by pushing the plugs into piles with the use of a trap rake. As you push the plugs the soil separates from the plug and starts to fill the holes, which means less topdressing will be needed. Again, man power is needed in this operation. Two men run the aerifiers, while four push the plugs and two pick up the plugs and drop them off in the weak areas that are designated around the course. As you can see there are a lot of techniques available to us, but as you can also see, some considerations have to be taken. First there is the cost, how much money do you want to spend? Second is the time, time is money and the more time spent the more the cost! Third is the equipment, what equipment is available to you? If you have the right equipment for your situation you can usually justify the initial cost because of the time and man power (cost) saved in the future. Fourth is the soil structure, can your greens take some of the heavy equipment I've mentioned? Fifth is the design of the greens, they have to be thought of, as I stated at Boca Pointe a Rak-O-Vac was used on the greens. But at Delray Dunes that same idea would not apply due to the knolls, undulations and dropoffs around the greens. The old-fashioned way of turning over your trap rakes and pushing the plugs to the side is the only alternative. And finally, what it all comes down to is the Superintendent, he knows what he has and what results he is looking for and what the Membership wants.

In conclusion, these Superintendents use different techniques for their aerifying programs and a lot of hard work and thinking goes into the process to get the results and quality they work for to complete the "ART OF AERIFYING." ■

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