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It's overseeding time, and for the first time in my 20-year career as a superintendent, I'm not overseeding!

For most Sun Belt courses, which have a winter golfing season instead of snowmobile races, overseeding of greens is not an option, but a necessity to ensure that golfers putt on grass instead of dirt. The bermudagrass greens found on the majority of southern courses

turn brown and go dormant during the winter, except in the southernmost regions, such as South Florida.

Overseeding with a cool-season grass, such as perennial rye or bentgrass, provides green color and a growing putting surface while providing protection to the dormant bermudagrass until temperatures warm up.

These grasses are more familiar to winter visitors from the North, so many of them expect and/or demand overseeded greens while they are down South.

Predicting weather is extremely risky, so even in South Florida many superintendents choose to overseed as insurance against the cold. Even if temperatures never get low enough to cause dormancy, the slower growth rate of bermudagrass in cool weather may be insufficient to allow recovery from heavy winter traffic. Greens could get beat to dirt even in a mild winter on small, poorly drained greens subjected to 250 rounds a day. The decision to overseed is given careful consideration,

based on an evaluation of factors at each club.

For instance, in my case (at the private Palm Beach National Golf & Country Club in Lake Worth), the compelling criterion to overseed for the past 14 years has been based on cold weather concerns. Actually, my greens were so contaminated with various bermudagrasses that the uniformity and consistency of overseeding was a vast improvement, and judicious use of fertilizers and activated charcoal have been able to negate the effects of cold snaps during a typical winter. In this area, the non-overseeded clubs have educated their members to accept the occasional cold-induced purplish color of Tifdwarf bermudagrass.

Many resort or daily-fee courses feel their clientele want bright green tees and greens no matter what, so overseeding is standard operating procedure.

The reason I decided not to overseed this year is because we rebuilt four more greens this summer. I now have 14 of 20 greens rebuilt to larger size, better drainage and excellent, consistent Tifdwarf. I no longer need to overseed to hide my Heinz 57 mongrels. Other important factors in my decision were the cost savings of not overseeding, and the elimination of the disruptive three-week overseeding establishment period.

I am confident that I am making the right decision given my circumstances, but I'm still nervous about the uncontrollable weather factor. (The armchair superintendents at my club will let me know in mid-season if they think I made the wrong decision.)

Wish me luck.

*Wish
me
luck!*

**Mark
my words**



Mark Jirrell
Mark Jirrell, CGCS

I think William Shakespeare, CGCS said it best when talking about his own Hamlet Country Club, "To overseed or not to overseed? Aye, that's the question. Whether 'tis

nobler to be greener than thy neighboring golf course in the winter or to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous transition in the spring?"

But before that

question can be answered Will and his boss must answer a few other budget busting queries: Whether to overseed at all? How much of the course to overseed? What type of seed to use? When to overseed?

Whether to overseed at all? This question is often asked by stingy Budget Committees, and Greens Committee members who hate the inconvenience of establishment and transition. After all, there was only one mild frost last year. The greens went off color for only one day, and they never got to wear their "I Love Golf" wool sweaters from St. Andrews.

At this point, you politely remind them that the country club they belong to was once an orange grove which was frozen to the ground one lovely Christmas Day by an unpredictable Siberian Express in an otherwise mild winter! You tell them that you must overseed in self defense and for the prevention of professional suicide.

This tactic works well if they are well mannered, sensitive people. If not, just

post their names on the club's bulletin board as those who refused to let you overseed. In addition, you might also name names in a full page ad in the local newspaper. The third step in this approach is to update your resume.

How much of the course to overseed? If you're selling real estate, have a big ego, have a fat wallet, have lightweight mowing equipment for your fairways, have control over tee times and the weather, have a modern irrigation system with excellent coverage, have good drainage on the course, have an understanding membership, have a membership that goes north for the summer transition, have lots of employees, and are envious of the course that does, why not overseed wall to wall?

If you answered "no" to at least two of the above conditions, you might want to consider limiting your overseeding to just greens and tees. You might tell the "wall to wall" faction that the cost of the seed is only about one third of the total cost to maintain the overseeded turf. When they have to back up their demands with dollars they might think twice... or they might just give you the dollars!

What type of seed to use? Do not use bird seed! It has millet and sunflower seed in it and they really slow down the putting speed. Stimpmeter readings for millet are minus five.

Do not use annual rye seed from Scotty's or Home Depot. True, it is

Ceding to Overseeding!

A light-hearted look at managing your course with a split seasonality.

Green Side Up



Joel D. Jackson
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Ceding to Overseeding

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inexpensive and you can make points with the Budget Committee, but the Greens Committee will have your hide when the weeds germinate along with the rye. They will also not appreciate the green speed which is now up to a plus two.

The golf purists who want the best genetically engineered, sleekest, fastest greens will use a mixture of German bentgrasses sold under the tradename, "Mercedes Bents". Other courses seeking quick greens in the winter will use a variety of rough bluegrass called *Poa trivialis*. It is neither "rough" nor

"blue". The FTC should look into this clear case of false advertising.

When to overseed? Re-read Murphy's Laws. Break out the ouija boards and tarot cards. Call Madam Sophie for a crystal ball reading. Dial the Psychic Hotline. Send a prayer request to Oral Roberts. Subscribe to the Farmer's Almanac. Tune in the Weather Channel. Cable Willard Scott. Write Sidney Omarr for your horoscope analysis.

Folks this is the mystical, magical realm of fortune tellers, tournament schedulers, and superstitious superintendents. It is Final Jeopardy and Wheel of Fortune all rolled up in one toss of the dice, except Alex Trebek and Pat Sajak don't have to face the music when disaster strikes. Mother

Nature rules!

And so, from the seed growers in the Willamette Valley in Oregon to the seed sowers on golf courses in sunny Florida, I leave you with:

*When all is said and all is done
And the seed is on the ground
The course is set, the die is cast
Into the season we are bound*

*No looking back, no second guess
'Tis time for firm determination
For sunny days and balmy nights
And prolific germination*

*A successful season I wish for you
And in the spring this proposition
That if you did your job and did it well
Nature grant you a smooth transition*



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