

Reprinted from the
Oct. 16 issue of
Golfweek

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**



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