



## Fairy Ring Experiment Pays Off at Sun 'n Lake

If the members at Sun 'n Lake Golf Club in Sebring hadn't already experienced problems with fairy ring, they may not have agreed to participate in a fairy ring experiment the winter of 1996. The club rebuilt the front-nine greens of the original 18-hole course in late summer of 1995 and began having problems with fairy ring in February 1996.

"We stripped the greens, reshaped them and cored them down to 12 inches," says Mark Hopkins, golf course superintendent for the past 8-1/2 years. "Then we brought in an 85/15 sand and Canadian peat mixture. Since we sit right on top of a sand hill, we didn't feel we needed any more drainage. But fairy ring most often attacks sand-based greens."

When fairy ring began popping up,

some of the Sun 'n Lake members first thought improper mowing procedures were causing the problem. But Hopkins launched an educational effort, posting information from the USGA about the disease on the club bulletin board and working to dispel the rumors about the brown, unsightly rings. Hopkins tried everything he could think of to control the problem: wetting agents, extra water and fungicides. He finally used the curative rate of ProStar® 50WP Fungicide and the problem cleared up within two weeks.



Golfers putt on practice green with fairy ring at Sun 'N Lake Golf Club in Sebring. Photo by Bob Hickman.

### Splitting Greens Down the Middle

Before rebuilding the back-nine greens, Hopkins talked to the greens committee and other club members to discuss what he wanted to do. He suggested

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applying ProStar® on half of each green at a preventive rate, as a test plot to see how well the fungicide controlled the fairy ring he knew would appear. "It's hard to get a golf course to split greens in half as an experiment," notes Hopkins. "But they knew we had to do something. Luckily, they got to see firsthand how well the product worked."

The greens were rebuilt and sprigged by May 1996. Hopkins waited four months before starting the applications so the greens would have full cover. He put PVC sleeves in the ground at the sides of each green and marked the halves with flags.

Starting in September, he first sprayed the green halves at a preventive rate of 3 ounces of ProStar® per 1000 square feet, returning every six weeks with the same rates of ProStar® and Primer, a wetting agent. The AgrEvo EH sales representative, Bob Hickman, supervised the experiment with the help of Dr. Monica Elliott from the University of Florida.

"Fairy rings started popping up on the sides we didn't spray by the end of February or early March 1997," explains Hopkins. "You could see a perfect line, where half the greens had rings all over them and the other halves were perfectly clean. The only thing we didn't see was half rings right at the center line!"

After Elliott and John Foy of the USGA Green Section visited the Sun 'n Lake course to observe the experiment, Hopkins sprayed ProStar® at the curative rate on the affected halves of each green. All the greens remained clean for two months after the ProStar® applications. Hopkins plans to continue using ProStar® on a regular basis during winter months until the fairy ring fungus completely goes away.

Since the newest nine-hole course on the 27-hole Sun 'n Lake facility was built only four years ago, Hopkins does not intend to rebuild those greens anytime soon. "But when we do rebuild them, we'll use ProStar® as a preventive treatment from the beginning," he said.

BOB HICKMAN  
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