



Putting Ultradwarfs to the Test

Appearances Don't Equal Performance

What's New with the NTEP 'Ultra' Trial at Jupiter Island Club

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There is a great deal of interest in the new ultradwarf bermudagrasses that are now becoming available for golf courses in the United States.

To develop an independent comparative database on the performance of these new bermudagrasses under a variety of climatic and geographical regions and different management, the United States Department of Agriculture's National Turfgrass Evaluation Program in cooperation with the United States Golf Association and Golf Course Superintendent's Association of America have set up an NTEP ultradwarf bermudagrass variety trial in the South at several locations.

Besides the far-reaching cooperation of the trial, a second unique aspect of this test is that all trials are being conducted on golf courses under routine management with play rather than on research farms.

I am the University cooperator in South Florida, while Dr. J. Bryan Unruh, UF, is leading the effort in the panhandle in Mobile, AL, and Dr. Richard White, Texas A & M, is leading a



Left to right. Ike Thomas, Marcus Prevatte, unidentified, Troy Koonsman, John Cisar, George Snyder and Herminia Vivas check out visual quality and ball roll on the test plots at the Jupiter Island Club during a recent visit.

comparative test in Texas.

Every so often, I thought I'd provide updates on the South Florida trial to Florida Superintendents through the *Florida Turf Digest* or *Florida Green*. This is the second article on the test and the first published in the *Florida Green*.

The South Florida test is being conducted on a USGA-specification practice green at the Jupiter Island Club in Jupiter Island with the great support of the club and Rob Kloska, golf course superintendent, and Rob's staff. The

trial was initiated in early June and early grow-in data was published in the Nov.-Dec. 1998 issue of the *Florida Turf Digest*.

The varieties in the test are listed in *Table 1*.

Although the test is being conducted to evaluate ultradwarfs, two standards, Tifdwarf and Tifgreen, have been incorporated into the test to act as benchmarks of performance for the new varieties.

The grasses are receiving routine greens maintenance and the grasses

NTEP Bermudagrass Entries and Sponsors.

Turfgrasses	Sponsor
MS-Supreme	Mississippi State University
TifEagle	Dr. Wayne Hanna, USDA
Mini-Verde	Thomas Bros. Grass Co.
Champion	Coastal Turf, Inc.
FloraDwarf	Florida Turfgrass Foundation
Tifdwarf	Standard Entry
Tifgreen	Standard Entry

Table 1.

One of the purposes of this article is to inform you of what's going on with ultradwarf research in the South. Both Rob Kloska (561-546-1184) and I (954-475-8990) encourage you to visit the Jupiter Island Club and take a look at the new grasses under comparative conditions.

are exposed to play as one might expect during the busy winter season in South Florida.

At the present time, Kloska is mowing daily at 0.120 inch. The green is lightly topdressed with sand two to four times per month. Irrigation during the first week of February was very lean — once every four to six days. Prior to that, irrigation had been applied somewhat more frequently. Fertility (especially N) has also been very lean since grow-in.

Turf Quality and Ball Roll

The experiment was initiated in June 1998 and grown in by early September. Dr. Kevin Morris, NTEP National Program Coordinator, Beltsville, Maryland provided the grasses. Tifgreen does not stand up to low mowing heights very well while some of the ultradwarfs are performing quite well even when irrigation was lean during early February (Table 2).

Our preliminary ball roll measurements indicate differences between the grasses as well (Table 2). FloraDwarf had the longest ball roll distance (Table 2). It should be noted that there are slope effects on the practice green and we are attempting to correct for slope differences within plots.

Once we correct for slope the results provided herein may require adjustment as well.

Interestingly, based on these initial observations, there doesn't appear to be a strong relationship between aesthetic quality and greens performance.

NTEP plots at Jupiter Island Club.

SOURCE	Quality 9/26	Quality 11/10	Quality 2/11	Ball Roll(ft) 2/11
FloraDwarf	8.5ab	7.2b	6.3bc	11.1a
MiniVerde	8.8a	8.8a	7.8a	9.4c
TifEagle	7.7bc	7.2b	7.3ab	10.4b
Tifdwarf	8.0abc	7.0bc	6.0c	10.3b
Champion	7.2cd	6.8bc	7.8a	10.4b
MSSupreme	6.3d	6.0c	7.2ab	10.0bc
Tifgreen	3.8e	4.2d	4.3d	9.6c
SIGNIF.	**	**	**	**

Table 2. Observations made from NTEP plots at Jupiter Island Club.

Means with the same letter within a column are not significantly different according to Duncan's Multiple Range Test.

Turf quality based on a 1-10 scale with 10=dense turf, 1=dead turf and 6=minimally acceptable.

** = $P < 0.01$

Consider FloraDwarf. FloraDwarf's turf quality scores on Feb. 11 are not among the best, yet ball roll distance on that date (a key factor for play performance) on FloraDwarf was significantly longer than other turfgrasses in the trial.

As the saying goes, "time will tell," and the race really is just beginning. This trial will be conducted over the next five years with ball roll, color, texture and other performance characteristics quantified.

One of the purposes of this article is to inform you of what's going on with ultradwarf research in the South. Both Rob Kloska (561-546-1184) and I (954-475-8990) encourage you to visit the Jupiter Island Club and take a look at the new grasses under comparative conditions.

Contact Kevin Morris (301-504-5125) for further information about other NTEP sites, tests, etc. Many visitors have already stopped by including representatives of the USGA Green Section Research Committee members, NTEP Director Kevin Morris, Dr. Dave Chalmers, Virginia Polytechnical Institute, and representatives from Thomas Bros. Turf.

Other non-NTEP sites in South Florida with some or all the ultradwarf varieties side-by-side include the Olde Florida Golf Club (Darren Davis, 941-353-4441) in Naples, and the University of Florida's Ft. Lauderdale REC. If you have the time make your own observations, seeing is believing.

The data in Table 2 reflects some visual turf quality scores since grow-in and a winter ball roll score.

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