

\$50,000 to \$75,000, and then there is the challenge of finding a contractor to perform this work. No doubt at some courses it will not be possible to complete the repairs and refurbishment work before next year.

Thunderstorms and a lot of rain can always be expected in Florida during September. However, in Palm Beach County the hurricanes dumped more than 28 inches, which broke all previous records for monthly rainfall in September. Naturally, course flooding was a common problem, and matters were compounded at facilities located on the barrier islands, which were inundated with salt water. It has been my experience that the bermudagrasses are a resilient species, and can recover after being under water for a couple of weeks or longer. As soon as the water recedes, aeration of flooded areas is recommended to aid in the recovery process.

Unfortunately, we are quickly running out of good growing weather and thus a complete recovery will not be possible. Record-setting rainfall has flushed all nutrients from the soil, and it is necessary to start all over with fertilization programs.

Clean-up of storm debris that littered every square foot of golf courses is very time-consuming and must be completed before routine maintenance practices, such as mowing, can be re-initiated. Debris clean-up can easily take a week or two, and it is being reported by many courses that finding extra help has been very difficult, further prolonging the clean-up process. Direct turf damage from the hurricanes fortunately did not occur, but having to take heavy clean-up equipment out onto the very wet and soft turf causes damage and will require additional repair work.

At the very least, the hurricanes caused a two- to three-week setback in course preparations for the upcoming winter season. For those who have had to deal with two or even three storms, the preparation setback is more in the six- to eight-week range. To compensate for environmental stresses, heights of cut have been raised, and several weeks

will be required to gradually work heights back down and reestablish appropriate conditioning. It is very important to minimize scalping damage so as not to exert additional mechanical stress and further slow growth and recovery.

I have been impressed with the speed at which recovery efforts have progressed so that the courses can be reopened to play in pretty good overall condition. As we go into the winter season with a much weaker base turf cover, there will be additional challenges and problems with maintaining course condition and quality in keeping with expectations during the winter season. Regardless of inputs, making a full recovery from the hurricanes will not be possible for many until next spring and summer. Ongoing golfer education efforts throughout the winter months are advisable to foster a degree of understanding and patience about the impacts of the 2004 hurricane season.

Green Section Internship Program – A Valuable Experience

By Todd Lowe

The USGA Green Section Internship Program offers opportunities for students studying turfgrass at universities throughout the United States to travel with USGA agronomists for one week each year. Some students hope to be golf course superintendents while others aspire to be turfgrass researchers, professors, or active in some other aspect of the industry. In any case, the internship is a real eye-opener as to the issues that superintendents face on a daily basis.

The Florida Region recently completed the 2004 Green Section Internship Program. Two graduate students from the University of Florida, Tina

Duperron and Nick Pool, learned a great deal about golf course renovations, managing golfer expectations, and factors affecting the long-term health and playability of golf course turf. The interns also evaluated the playability of seashore paspalum for Florida golf courses.

Some of the agronomic issues discussed during Turfgrass Advisory Service visits included putting green playability and issues affecting turf health. Nematodes were active at most of the golf courses during the visits, and various chemical and cultural programs were discussed. Also, with the peak golfing season approaching, protecting the turf against excessive cart traffic was a common topic as well.



Todd Lowe

Numerous other topics were discussed and the interns were busy taking notes during each visit.

The action-packed week was filled with TAS visits, courtesy stop-by visits as well as a regional golf course superintendents meeting. The interns also interacted with Edison Community

College's Golf Course Operations director, Dr. Lee Berndt, as they toured research/demonstration plots and discussed an upcoming USGA-funded research project that will be conducted at the college. Lastly, the interns attended a golf club membership meeting, where a presentation on putting green renovation was followed by a lively discussion with the members.

Having once been an intern myself, I know that the USGA Green Section Program is a valuable experience. No matter what segment of the golf course business the interns choose following graduation, the information gained during the internship will certainly benefit them and the entire industry.

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