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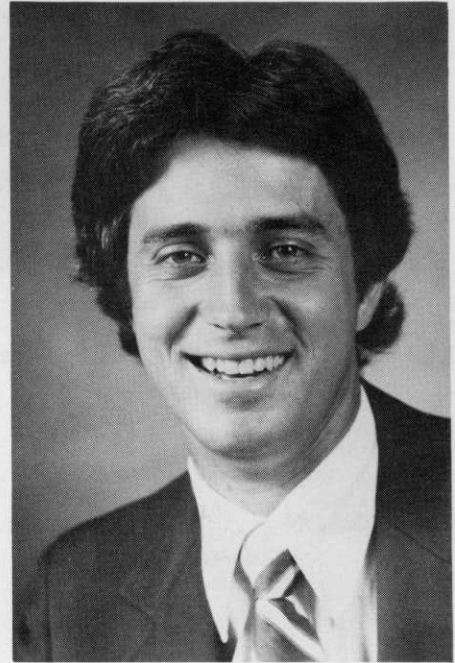
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President's Message



The transition of *The South Florida Green* into *The Florida Green* marks the beginning of a new era for golf course superintendents in the state of Florida. As professionals in the golf course industry our objectives and activities must be coordinated on a state wide basis in order to properly keep pace with today's technology and varied crises. We should continually seek to improve our professional image not only with upper management but with the general public. This can be demonstrated through work we do by continuing to upgrade our professional capabilities and through skilled communication such as this magazine. Only by making people aware of the skills, management, technology and immense responsibility required to operate a golf course facility, can the golf course superintendent receive the recognition for his accomplishments.

This magazine is a valuable communication tool which if used properly will create a multitude of benefits. It's up to the individuals to promote themselves. The golf course superintendent is a great salesperson at budget time, why not promote his or herself with these same skills?

The re-organization of the Florida Golf Course Supt. Assoc. occurred nearly two years ago. From the beginning the officers of your local chapters have devoted many hours to carefully nurture and construct a solid foundation for our state association. Seven organized and unified chapters working toward a common goal and speaking with one voice can be more productive than a fragmented organization. This does not mean a loss of identity, functions or uniqueness for your local chapter. In fact, the accomplishments of each chapter will be magnified because of increased communication across the state.

As a state association our number one priority is to focus on Florida issues and meet the demands of our members and their chapters (an example would be registering a complaint on the ban of DBCP in Florida). The number two objective is to gain support and membership for the GCSAA. This is our national organization that needs our backing and input. The benefits will be many and the recognition that comes from unification of our efforts will be readily available to us.

But, there are many other benefits. Just recently, one of our fellow golf course superintendents Dan Meyers (CGCS) of the West Coast chapter had his story concerning golf course employees featured in the National Magazine, *Golf Course Management*. The article was pertinent to our problems, beneficial and educational.

The golf course superintendents in the state of Florida have been thrust into an enviable position. Because of geographical location, climate, tourist attractions, and expansion, Florida has the fastest growing golf industry in the country. We should take advantage of these opportunities and assume a leadership role in the nation's turf industry.

Possibly, even with all our collaboration and hard work, government agencies will continue to tie our hands and people will still refer to us as "Greenskeepers". It's unfortunate that the work of qualified professionals can be affected or altered by the misuse of others less qualified and thousands of miles away. Let's join together and try the positive approach. Support your local chapter, the state association and the GCSAA. Hopefully, we can continue to endeavor in the field we love for ourselves and the game of golf.

Tom Hein

The Florida Green

The Official Bulletin of the Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association

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Dan Jones, C.G.C.S., Editor

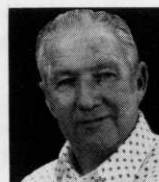
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ABOUT OUR COVER

GREAT WHITE EGRET, with breeding plumage, feeding in pond adjoining Key Biscayne Golf Course, Miami.

Color Photograph by Harry McCartha

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Topdressing: A Practical Approach To Good Management

By HUBERT E. (AL) FRENETTE



In recent months, a lot has been written about the pitfalls and dangers of topdressing with sand or sand-organic mixtures. This followed on the heels of a paper published at one of the turf schools in California. Superintendents who experimented with the technique gave varying opinions on its merits. Some saw no significant difference from their normal program, some saw a marked improvement, and still others abandoned the program as too time-consuming for the benefits noted.

In the wake of this experimenting came the warnings from everyone who needed to publish. Close analysis of some of these papers will reveal a similarity to some well-known authors' views on topdressing. Unfortunately, the new opinions were taken out of context. In some cases, the writer appears to be totally ignorant of the subject of topdressing and has assembled a paper of theory, opinion, and reprinted materials from recognized authorities on the subject of turf management.

This writer intends to present a practical approach to the business of topdressing, concentrating on the purpose, materials, blending, and application of topdressing on fine turf areas.

For years, golf course superintendents have recognized the practice of topdressing as a valuable tool. Research has further taught us the purposes for which topdressing can be used in a total program. We recognize it as a tool for the control of thatch, probably the most important reason, because it promotes bacterial activity that reduces thatch, footprinting, disease incidence, and graininess. Spring and fall topdressings eliminate or mask scarring from worn turf and ball marks. In addition, topdressing newly seeded areas aids in stabilizing the seed and hastening germination. As an added benefit, topdressing helps level the surface and promotes juvenility. Some would disagree with the order of importance placed on this list but none would disagree that topdressing provides all the benefits listed.

When we speak of topdressing as a tool for maintaining a good growing medium or as a method of renovating poor growing conditions, two things are basic; (1) the topdressing material should complement a good soil profile and (2) the material should improve a poor soil profile. Beyond this we cannot expect topdressing to perform miracles. Stick to the basics and you can forget what might happen in 10 to 20 years.

Prior to starting a topdressing program, the superintendent should have a valid test made of the available materials. This test should be made by a USGA approved laboratory to determine whether the materials are suitable and to make recommendations as to the ratio of sand, soil and organic. The existing seedbed should also be tested to determine whether it requires modification or is acceptable as a well-drained, silt-free growing medium. The success or failure of your topdressing program will depend on your knowledge of your soils and no amount of fingering or feel will tell you what a soil test can.

A lot has been written about the benefits of purchasing topdressing materials as opposed to preparing your own. A recent article stated that it was much cheaper to purchase prepared materials, that was of higher quality, than go through the trouble of mixing your own. This was the same fellow that recommended using 15-20% soil (whatever that is) in your mix to avoid the evils of sand topdressing.

A word of caution on purchasing materials. In some areas, topdressing and seedbed mixes are being sold as the answer to the superintendent's need for a blended material. Many of these do not meet USGA requirements for a suitable growing medium. Investigate beyond the advertisement and claims; have all such materials tested and approved before you use them in your topdressing program.

It has been our experience here at Peachtree that preparing your own topdressing definitely saves time and money. It saves time because you have a material which is homogenous and weed-free, spreads easily, and mats in without any cleanup required. It saves money because you can utilize your crew in the off-season and the cost of the materials is far less than the prepared mix. Last, but not least, you know exactly what is going on your turf. We use a 9-0-1 ration (9 sand - 0 soil - 1 organic) which matches our original seedbed mix of 8-0-2 with somewhat less organic.

Many superintendents shy away from the thought of spending the time mixing topdressing. A painless method is suggested below and we have found these steps to be very successful:

1. Sand - 100 tons at \$7.00 per ton \$700.00
We use an approved (dirty) sand pumped from the Chattahoochee river and washed through screens for proper gradation. The sand is

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spread dumped on a corner of the parking lot which provides a perfect work area. During the off-season, the lot can be used during the weekend without any difficulty. The sand is then spread evenly to a depth of 1 foot over an area approximately 30 feet wide by 80 feet long (2400 cu. ft.) The spreading is done by 2 men in 4 hours (8 manhours at \$4.00 per hour

32.00

If extremely dry, the sand is wet down to provide ample moisture for fumigation.

2. Peat - 120 bags at \$1.95 per 2 cu. ft. bag Using a ratio of 9-0-1, we purchase 240 cubic feet of processed Michigan peat which is readily available at a local nursery. The organic fraction is included to prevent layering and not for moisture retention or CEC.

234.00

The bags of peat are laid out on the sand at 6 foot intervals by 6 men. The bags are then slit across the center and dumped in a cone shaped pile. These piles will support the tent for fumigation. This step takes the 6 men about 1 hour. (6 manhours at \$4.00 per hour)

24.00

3. Polyethylene Sheet - 40' x 100' (6 mil)

42.00

We place this sheet over the peat and secure the edges with sand to prevent the sheet from being lifted by the wind. This operation takes the 6 men about 1 hour (6 manhours at \$4.00 per hour)

24.00

4. Dowfume - 1 Carton (24 lbs.)

45.00

The material is fumigated with Methyl Bromide at the rate of 1 lb. per 100 cubic feet. This operation should be done on a sunny day and when the temperature is above 40°F. This will enable the gas to volatilize and disperse. The Methyl Bromide is released under the sheet with the approved applicator. Due to the risk involved in this operation, the superintendent or his assistant is responsible for actually releasing the chemical. This step takes about 1 hour.

6.75

We leave the fumigant under the sheet for about 48 hours. We try to complete the whole operation on a Friday and leave the sheet on over the weekend. As stated earlier, should the temperature drop below 40°F, we will leave the sheet on until we have gotten at least 1 day of sunshine on the polyethylene

When the sheet is removed, the mix is allowed to air for some 1-2 hours. Removing the sheet requires the same 6 men for about 1/2 hour (3 manhours at \$4.00 per hour)

12.00

5. Blending

The piles of peat are now spread to a uniform layer over the entire area, using wide bunker rakes. This step will take 2 men 1 hour to complete (2 manhours at \$4.00 per hour)

8.00

We now put a small garden tiller on the pile and till it as deep as possible, in two directions. 1 man can complete this operation in 4 hours (4 manhours at \$4.00 per hour)

16.00

The final blending operation is for 1 man and a front end loader to move all material into a pile as high as the loader will reach. This should take about 3 hours. This pile is then moved to a second location, further mixing the material. Both steps take some 6 hours (loader and operator at \$5.00 per hour)

30.00

6. Storage

The material is now loaded into a dump truck and taken to a suitable storage area (preferably a sheltered area) to keep it dry and prevent contamination. Normally, this operation will take 1 man with a loader and dump truck 1 day

50.00

7. Cost

The total cost of this entire operation amounts to about \$1,225.00, including all materials and labor. This breaks down to \$12.25 per ton of topdressing material that is tested, fumigated, blended, and available when you need it. Compare these figures to any prepared mix that you can purchase.

No further handling is necessary until the topdressing is taken to the green or turf area. When using topdressing on greens, we shovel the material onto a 1/4" mesh screen fitted over the topdresser. This gives us a trash-free material which mats in smoothly and requires no further handling or cleanup.

In summary, your topdressing program should be geared to the soil conditions and problems on your particular course. No prepared material available for purchase can meet all requirements. The time and money you invest in preparing your own topdressing will provide you with the type of material tailored to your needs.






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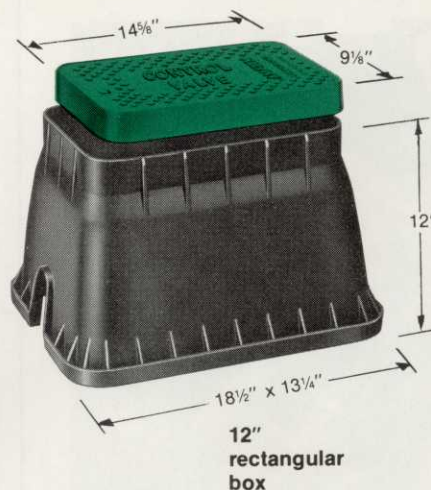
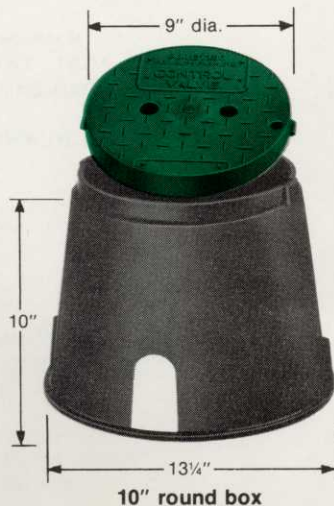
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Original Freddy Stages Breakout

By Larry Nunn

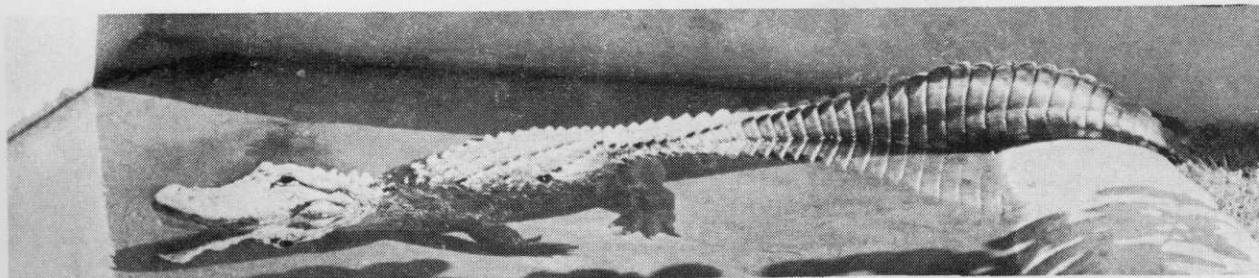
"Don't pay the ransom honey, I've escaped." These are the opening lines of a country-western hit, but recently it applied to "Freddy" the District's original alligator.

For a period of two days we waited expectantly for "Freddy" to return to his original home in Lake Park, but he never showed. For years we have heard about alligators being captured and taken to remote areas in the Everglades, and after a period of time, somehow they find their way back to their original home.

We first met "Freddy" nearly 11 years ago when he burst forth from his egg during the filming of the international award winning film "Alligator." It was love at first sight, and when "Freddy" cuddled up to me I realized that he must become my pet. It took some doing, but finally the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission issued a permit to raise "Freddy" in captivity.

During the next two years a hectic friendship blossomed between the tiny six-inch alligator and his loving master. During that time he was fed hamburger, fresh minnows obtained from a bait shop, and on Sundays he was treated to marshmallows which he adored. At first "Freddy" was housed in a fish aquarium, but as he grew larger, and larger, a special built aquarium was constructed that provided water to swim in, dry land to sun in and ample food for a dozen alligators. No one told us that alligators hibernate during the winter and when "Freddy"

(Continued on Page 11)



HOW "FREDDY" HAS GROWN--Top photo. Paula Guerina holds "Freddy" shortly after he hatched from an egg, a scene that was captured for the District's prize winning film "Alligator!" Center--Two years later Larry Nunn turns his pet over to officials at the Dreher Park Zoo. Bottom photo shows "Freddy" as he looks today after being captured following a two day breakout from his Zoo headquarters.