

International, Summit Hall team up on 4-acre bentgrass plot

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international superintendent Steve Nash. Nash said he spoke with several superintendents who were "not quite happy with the match of mixes" they had received in their own greens rebuilding programs.

"The mixes were just a little bit off and they were afraid they were getting a layering effect," he said. "This was a guarantee on our part that we will have the exact same stuff..."

"USGA mixes are basically supposed to be the same but there are minor differences — different sand or sphagnum, for instance."

Doug Fender, executive director of the American Sod Producers Association, said from his Rolling Meadows, Ill., headquarters: "There have been occasions where contract growing has occurred. But four acres is a considerable operation. In most cases two to four greens (or 10,000 to 20,000 square feet) is all that's involved. And most of it is grown on existing soils. What strikes me is the degree of specification — taking it from the soil on up.

"I'd put it right up there in Ripley's Believe It or Not."

Fender added: "Summit Hall has an excellent reputation and history. This would not be the first challenge they've done well with."

Mike Robinson, president of Seed Research of Oregon, whose SR 1019 and SR 1020 bentgrasses are being used in the project, said: "I think this is the first of what will be a



The first sod is cut from four acres of bentgrass at Summit Hall Turf Farm in Poolesville, Md. "It was 'beautiful,'" said International Tennis and Country Club superintendent Steve Nash.

trend.

"Most of the older courses in this country were built on old native soil. They're mainly poa annua. They're fighting the poa annua constantly. They have heavy fungicide budgets and it's a real headache for them. If they can rebuild their greens with sand bases and put in brand new germplasm, it's going to be a tremendous improvement in management

— lowering costs of fertilizer and fungicides and water. Keeping bent alive in the summer is a lot easier than poa annua. Playability will also be improved."

The 30-year-old International greens were rebuilt "because we had no drainage whatsoever," Nash said. "The greens were just pushed-up topsoil. Some were extremely small. Some were small with severe contours that limited our cupping area. We were doing upwards of 50,000 rounds of golf a year and were wearing the greens out. With no drainage, a storm would soak the greens and, with all those golfers, they would turn to mud.

"To keep up to date with modern golfing play and technology we just had to rebuild."

EXTENSIVE PREPARATIONS

The massive project was started last September when 70 tandem trucks hauled 1,500 tons of soil mix to Summit Hall's farm. (The \$40,000 price tag was borne by International, which will probably pay another \$60,000 or so for the sod, according to Nash.)

The soil mix was carefully spread at a

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— Douglas Fender
American Sod Producers

depth of two inches over a four-acre tract of a flat land. The seed was sown in the fall to avoid weed encroachment and to give the bentgrass time to cover the ground by spring.

Frank Wilmot, manager of Summit Hall, said: "The soil mix was sterilized coming in and has gone without herbicides. The idea is to get a good root system. Steve can take care of any weeds once he gets the sod, but it's pretty clean.

"We're mowing at three-eighths inch — just above green height — two to three times a week ... and we've been watering about twice a week depending on the weather."

A week before shipments of the sod were to begin, Nash said: "We just cut five pieces. It came up absolutely beautiful. We couldn't have wanted it any better."

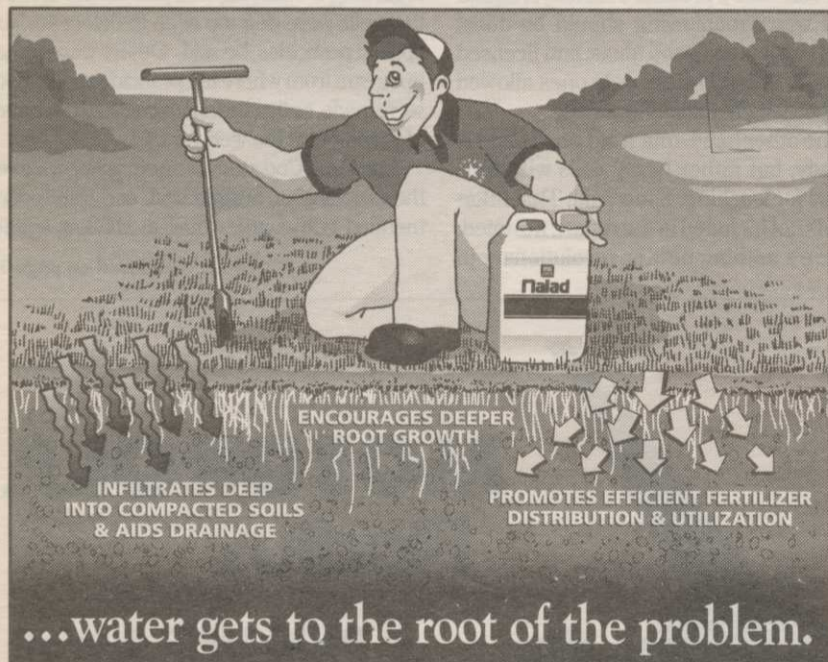
Nash also couldn't be happier with the speed of the project. Under the oversight of architect Bill Love of Ault, Clark Associates, the greens were torn up on June 10. The perimeters of the greens were sodded with bluegrass from Ray Weekly's nearby Chantilly Turf Farms, Inc. starting Aug. 12. And the sodding is expected to be complete by Sept. 26.

"One of our objectives was to get it playable as soon as possible," Nash said. "We were pressed for time. We had to hold off in the spring for tournament play on temporary greens and to give members some play. We'll hold off play until the end of next March."

What will happen to the four-acre sod site once all International's sod is hauled away?

"We'll take one-quarter to one-half inch of the root system when we harvest the turf," Wilmot said. "We'll probably then work sand into the soil underneath and bring in more sand mix for another harvest."

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