

Consistency, fairness the objectives of PGA Tour guidelines

Editor's note: This is the first of a three-part series on the PGA Tour's conditioning guidelines.

The purpose of these Tour conditioning guidelines is to assist the golf course superintendent and the sponsors in providing a golf course that tests the players' skill, is fair to all contestants, and one that has consistent playing conditions in all areas of the course.

The following guidelines cannot apply to all courses because of grass types, design and the time of year certain events are played.

Yet, since players of all caliber enjoy and benefit from playing under tournament conditions, it is recommended that the following guidelines be adhered to as much as possible during the rest of the year as well as during the event. Some changes will of course be necessary because of weather and membership demands, but usually when this is done, the membership enjoys the improved playability of the course. Maintaining near-tournament conditions also makes preparation for the following year's event much easier.

GREENS

In general most superintendents will be asked to provide green speeds of 10 feet the week prior to the tournament. This speed allows the Tour official to make a final determination of tournament speed which can be obtained quite easily. Arbitrarily achieving higher green speeds could eliminate prime hole positions for the tournament. The

USGA Stimpmeter should be used frequently prior to the tournament not only to check overall speed but also to check the consistency of all greens. This is very important to contestant reaction to the course.

Firm but not hard greens are to be the goal. This may require hand watering prior to and during the event. Key staff members should be trained to recognize areas of the greens that dry out needing supplemental irrigation, and those areas where overwatering should be avoided. The use of a hose end

canister containing a wetting agent has proven valuable in maintaining uniform moisture levels when hand watering is required.

If the greens drain uniformly there is certainly no reason why the greenside sprinklers cannot be used during the tournament. However great care should be exercised to make sure that overwatering does not occur, as it will increase spike marks, lessen the skill required to hold a shot, and possibly cause greenside bun-

ker sand to become overly wet.

Many superintendents believe that topdressing programs should stop weeks before the tournament. This is not true, and frequent light topdressing can and should occur right up to tournament week. Improved ball roll and reduced spike marks will result when a frequent light topdressing schedule is followed.

The following other items will help produce quality tournament surfaces:

- Use vertical mowing and

grooming equipment to reduce surface grain.

- Have aeration procedures to reduce thatch completed well before the tournament.

- Program fertilizer applications so that clipping removal rates are moderate; usually a rate of between 3/4 and 1 basket are optimal one week before the tournament.

- Review the previous year's hole locations and avoid these tournament areas for regular play

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Conditioning tips

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Tour, Senior PGA Tour and Nike Tour have changed over the years, going with the flow of the Tournament Policy Board.

These current guidelines differ mostly in that in the past the courses were set up to have the same playing condition each week. Today, the course condition guidelines must fit each course with its strengths and few weaknesses. Because of this development, current guidelines can be useful to superintendents preparing for any tournament, at any club.

In the past, the guidelines for fairway widths was 25 to 35 yards. Today, there are no standard fairway widths. They are determined by the Tour agronomists on their normal advance visits.

The following guidelines are for the PGA. All USGA guidelines come under the auspices of the of the regional USGA Green Section agronomists and championship agronomist, with their headquarters at Golf House in Far Hills, NJ. The LPGA has its own set of guidelines, also, and the LPGA can be reached at its headquarters in Daytona Beach, Fla. Likewise, the PGA specifications can be obtained from its headquarters in West Palm Beach, Fla.



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New Jersey DEPE funds municipal solid waste study at Rutgers

TRENTON, N.J. — The state Department of Environmental Protection and Energy (DEPE) will participate in a multi-year study by Rutgers University, funded by a public/private partnership, to determine whether composted municipal solid waste can be used as a nutrient supplement on field crops and by the horticultural industry, DEPE Commissioner Scott Weiner announced.

"Composting is one of the components

in achieving our goal of 60-percent recycling of the total waste stream and in attaining solid waste self-sufficiency," Weiner said. "This research project will examine the availability of markets for compost products, look at the relative safety in the use of composted materials, and provide a basis for application standards."

The total cost of the project is estimated to be as much as \$1.2 million, depending on private sector contribu-

tions. The DEPE is contributing \$250,000 from the Recycling Fund, created by the Statewide Mandatory Source Separation and Recycling of 1987. A tax on each ton of solid waste disposed in landfills is used to provide monies for public education, research, and market development programs. Rutgers is contributing the in-kind research expertise of its agricultural experiment stations and staff. The field research will be done at Rutgers' Agricultural Extension

Service farms near Freehold and Pittstown and in North Brunswick Township.

The study also will include a four-year evaluation of the compost's effect on growth when it is applied to field corn and whether it enhances crop yields. The compost's suitability for growing turfgrasses, application to landscape plants, and creating topsoil from the disturbed soil at construction sites is also being studied, Gabel said.



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PGA Tour guidelines

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at least two weeks before the tournament.

- Ensure that all greenside sprinkler heads are at grade to prevent marking as "ground under repair," near the putting surfaces.

- Make sure that an adequate number of greens mowing machines (preferably single unit) are on hand and properly serviced.

- Have two skilled cup changers and necessary equipment, on hand for the placement of the holes during the tournament.

- Repair scalped or low plugs two weeks before the tournament.

- Mowing heights on both cold and warm season grasses should range between 1/8 to 5/32 of an inch during the tournament to obtain desired greenspeed.

TEEING GROUNDS

Firm, level, closely mown teeing grounds are necessary for tournament play. The mowing height should be between 1/4 and 3/8 inch depending on grass type and time of year. A problem with many championship tees is thatch, mainly because of lack of use by the general membership. Where thatch is a problem, vigorous vertical mowing, topdressing and close monitoring of fertilizer applications, especially nitrogen should occur to eliminate sponginess well before the tournament.

Par 3 and short par 4 holes where iron shots are played should be protected in advance and extra efforts to fill and seed divots should take place. During practice rounds, these tees should be protected with plastic mesh so that unobstructed areas are available for use during the tournament.

Mowing patterns that exceed the flat portions of the tees, or those that do not point toward the landing areas should be corrected.

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In conclusion, the trend in Tour conditioning is away from standardization of playing conditions and toward a program of treating each course on an individual basis. This will protect the design intent and allow the course set-up to take advantage of each course's strong points.