

A new technique to an old problem: divot repair in the North

By FRANK DOBIE

In 1990, at the direction of O'Neil, our president, we initiated divot repair of tees and fairways with "divot mix containers" mounted on each golf car. Although filling divots from car-mounted containers is standard procedure on Southern courses, not much has been done in the North.

Until this time, we asked players to replace their turf divots. Divots that did not live, or were not replaced, were filled with a top

dressing mix by the golf course staff. Tee divots were filled on a regular basis and fairways were done when we had spare time.

At first, I resisted the idea of divot mix containers on the golf cars because I did not like the bucket-and-scoop method. I had played at clubs that used the buckets and scoops and found them to be messy. The divot mix was scattered on the cars from careless use. Scoops were regularly lost. The open-top buckets allowed the mix to get wet, making it

difficult to dispense. Players tended to scoop out too much mix and overfill the divot hole. They also would throw it down at the divot, sometimes missing the hole.

Not only was the process messy but the excess mix would cause damage to the mowers' cutting blades.

On Southern courses the divot mixes contain perennial ryegrass seed that can be used on tees, fairways and roughs. In the North, however, we use bentgrass seed on tees and fairways but do

not want it planted in the rough.

I was very concerned that unaware players might fill divots in the rough.

After looking at a variety of buckets and scoops, we finally found a plastic bottle dispenser made by Club Car. The bottle holder mounts easily on the car. It is neat in appearance and is easy to use. The pouring spout opening is small enough to prevent rain water from damping the mix. We purchased several and asked a few conscientious

members to test the procedure. The results were very positive.

We sent instructions to the membership in a monthly newsletter. Occasionally, we find a few players over-filling the divot holes, so reminder notices are needed. Since tee and fairway turf are the only areas that are to be repaired with this method, the membership must be informed never to use the mix in the rough.

At first, we mounted only one dispenser on each car. We soon discovered that we needed a bottle on each side of the car for the program to be really effective.

DIVOT MIX PREPARATION

1. 30 gal. top dressing mix of silica sand, mason sand and peat.
2. 10 lbs. Isolite (for added moisture-holding capacity).
3. 2 cups bentgrass seed.
4. 3 lbs. (12-24-14) slow-release fertilizer.

The top dressing is spread on asphalt to dry in the sun. The fertilizer, Isolite and seed are mixed in with a rake. It is critical that the mixture be absolutely dry so that it pours easily from the divot mix bottles.

The dry mix also prevents the bentgrass seed from germinating prematurely in the containers. If the mix is moist, it does not pour easily and the players will not use it.

A 30-gallon, closed container of mix is kept outside the pro shop, where the clubs are unloaded. The bag boys fill the divot mix bottles on each car when they come in from play.

Tip the spout down at a 45-degree angle and gently shake the bottle from side to side over the divot hole. This produces a controlled flow of the mix into the hole. Fill the hole about 80 percent full and then step down on the mix. Do not overfill the hole because any sand mix that is higher than the soil line will contact and dull the mower's cutting blades.

We ask players to discard the turf divot in the nearby rough or place it on the floor of the golf car. We will be experimenting with a small plastic container mounted on each car for old divots and other debris.

The divot mix not only levels the surface but it is an effective way of establishing bentgrass into poa annua turf. It eliminates the unsightly dead turf divot. It promotes fast turf recovery.

The dispenser bottle is so handy and easy to use that players seem to prefer it to walking forward to pick up and replace their turf divot. We see a higher percentage of divots repaired now than ever before.

Staff man-hours are much less with this method. Most of all, it heightens the players' awareness of golf etiquette and gives them an active role in maintaining a finer course.

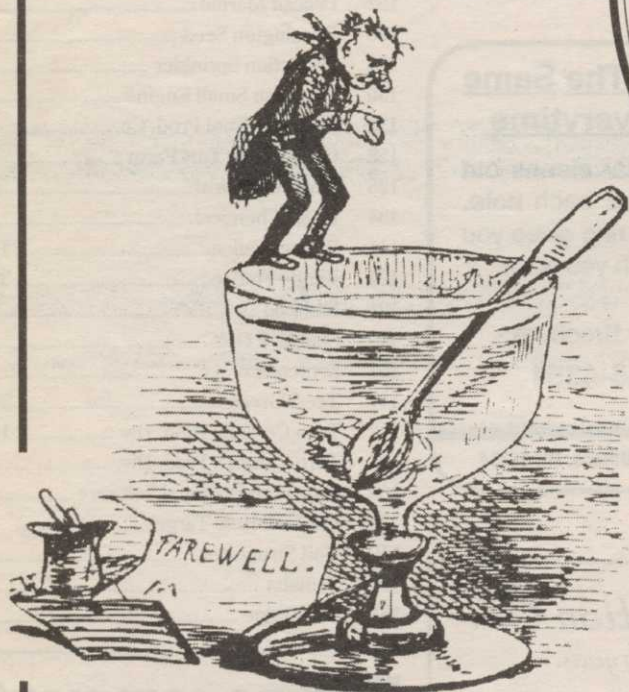
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NEW JERSEY

GOOD GRIEF...
ANOTHER WETTING AGENT!



"I
ALMOST
TOOK
THE PLUNGE
WHEN
SURF-SIDE
WALKED IN THE DOOR"

The golf course is a Muirhead design. Millions of dollars were spent moving sand in flat South Jersey to create a spectacular and challenging golf course (The 17th tee is one of the highest points in Cape May County). Hot, dry, summer conditions on our sand greens, tees & fairways planted to Penn Cross / Penn Links needed a wetting agent for survival... and don't think wetting agents are all the same. We've tried most wetting agents and had our share of disappointments. The greens are about 98% sand and 2% organic matter making them **extremely hydrophobic**. We have used

normal maintenance / aeration procedures over the past 4 years to improve the root zone but in 1991 we started applying Surf-Side at rates sufficient to eliminate watering problems. We start with a shock treatment in May of 12-oz/M on greens and if that isn't sufficient we go to 16 or 24-oz/M. This is applied at 6 gals Surf-Side in 160 gals water and we do water-in at these higher rates. **On high sand greens that repel water it's best to spike about an inch before treatment. It increases effectiveness like you wouldn't believe.** To maintain collars we use 3-lbs/M of Granular Surf-Side and apply in two passes... syringing is one thing on collars; keeping the grass alive and looking well is another. We drench the grass faces of traps with 1-gal Surf-Side in 100 gals of water as well as localized dry spots on fairways. We apply with a gun, and don't water-in the treatment. We've reduced syringing 30 to 40% and only need 1 to 2 men under the worst of hot, dry, summer conditions. We do find a residual using Surf-Side. After establishing control of our greens with 130-oz/M in 1991 we are now down to 64-oz/M in 1992. It is best to cure your watering problems up front with the Surf-Side and then adjust rates accordingly. We apply 2-gals Surf-Side in 160 gals water to 80,000 sq.ft. with all our contact and systemic sprays. We've had no disease problems in the past two years. The same Surf-Side mix is applied to fairways every 3 weeks at the rate of 3-oz/M. Lastly, we put 10 gals Surf-Side in our 2000 gal FERTIGATION TANK and meter 450 gals of mix into our irrigation line per week. The Surf-Side gives us a quicker response on leaf absorption of nutrients. Surf-Side 37 can bring overall maintenance & watering costs into line... **The product pays for itself.**

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