

Can compost actually fight snow mold?

By PETER BLAIS

GLENVIEW, Ill. — Superintendent Dan Dinelli is experimenting with yard compost this fall to see if the organic alternative will help suppress snow mold here at North Shore Country Club.

"There's some data that supports the idea that a top dressing of compost injected with certain bacteria can help prevent snow mold," Dinelli said. "It's pretty preliminary data. But since they've taken away the mercury-containing products we've always used to combat snow mold, we've got to find an alternative."

"There are several other fungicides out there, but none that work as well as the mercury products. Compost is a natural alternative. Hopefully it works."

Laying down snow mold treatments to prevent snow mold is one of the main winter preparation projects at Northern courses. Snow mold is particularly prevalent where snow remains on the ground for three months or more without a thaw. It is characterized by the springtime appearance of grayish to dark brown-colored areas ranging from 3 to 24 inches in diameter.

Dinelli plans to test a compost mix

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A Scott's Company fertilizing/overseeding vehicle on the job in Jacksonville.

Fertilize & overseed: All at once

By PETER BLAIS

MARIETTA, Ga. — It's mid-fall, the summer help has returned to school and superintendent Tracy Meeks is looking at overseeding Canterbury Golf Club with a "bare bones" crew.

Until a couple of years ago, Meeks' crew did the time-consuming job itself with the limited equipment available at the course. That's when O.M. Scott representatives approached him about putting their custom fertilizing trucks to a new use, i.e. overseeding Meeks' course.

"It's worked very well," Meeks said. "There are some skips because the trucks act as giant drop spreaders. The little that doesn't get covered we can go back and do ourselves. Overall, though, it's the quickest way I've seen to get the course green for winter."

Scott first introduced its fleet of fertilizer trucks in 1992,

example, the truck travels through the center of the fairway at 11 to 12 miles per hour. It slows significantly as it approaches the green. The radar tells the computer the green is ahead, the vehicle slows and the computer slows the application rate.

"The technician operating the vehicle is the key to the operation, however. We hire trained golf course personnel, many assistant superintendents, who understand the placement of seed."

Meeks was impressed with the operators. "I don't even send someone to ride with them anymore," he said. It cost Meeks \$12,000 to overseed Canterbury's 20 acres of fairway. That included three visits: an initial starter fertilizer, the actual seed and a high-quality fertilizer application in early winter.

Two years ago, Scott realized it could also help Northern courses prepare for winter by using the same vehicles to

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Hayter Cup

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and Neil Thomas, executive director of the British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA). It was at the Hayter Challenge finals in September 1994 when the idea of an international team match was first floated. It took shape through 1995 and was birthed publicly in September 1995.

European success during the 1995 Ryder Cup at Oak Hill played no small part in the final decision to proceed.

Yet the competitive element, though fundamental, is not the only raison d'être of the new contest. Macfie recognizes the value in the cross fertilization of ideas

and methods in turf care, to say nothing of the opportunity for European greenkeepers to share experiences with their counterparts around the globe. Given Hayter's line of business and its current modest showing in the North American market, this is hardly surprising. Not that Macfie is in any way coy about this point — as sales and marketing director, he is obviously keen, as he puts it, to "raise the profile of Hayter around the globe, particularly in North America."

More power to his elbow if this is to be a biennial event and the return match will be stateside.

Selection of the two 12-man teams was fairly uniform, with the top players from the various domestic greenkeeper's tourna-

ments being chosen to fill out the respective sides. The Americas squad drew players from North, Central and South, while The Rest of the World is represented by Britain, Europe and Australasia. Team spirit will have to be built quickly.

Explained Dean Cleaver, non-playing captain of the Rest of the World team: "We'll meet the first time on Saturday, have a practice round on the Sunday, sink a few beers in the evening and discuss selection and tactics then."

The match starts Monday.

Cleaver is taking his job very seriously. He recognizes the guys on his team have succeeded through many rounds of golf to get there. But is he confident? Will his team win?

"I hope so," said Cleaver. "We will certainly be competitive."

He's not kidding. One of the two German greenkeepers on the team actually flew to West Lancashire last month in order to get to know the course.

"But winning isn't everything," Cleaver observed. "The most important thing is the bringing together of like-minded people to discuss our profession and learn a little bit from each other."

Cleaver's pre-Cup politesse sets off a swirl of déjà vu. Hungry for some sign of high-stakes build-up, this correspondent tried to press the "True Brit" and scratch him into aggressive gamesmanship. But he wasn't having any of it:

GCN: Don't you want to crow

a little bit about the Ryder Cup?

Cleaver: Hah hah hah, oh no... hum, no, I wouldn't like to say that at all.

Perhaps all this was a front. As Cleaver talked about the venue for the Hayter International, he let slip a nugget of information which smacks of gamesmanship.

GCN: Why is the event to be held at the West Lancashire GC?

Cleaver: Because the Challenge Finals were hosted so well there last year.

GCN: Ah! So the four Brits in the team know the course reasonably well?

Cleaver: I suppose so... but it wasn't the reason we chose it, honestly [silence]. It's a typically British seaside course so I don't suppose the Americans will have much experience of such courses.

Sneaky Dean, very sneaky. Well done.

But what of the greenkeeper of the West Lincs course? How does he feel about having 24 of the best golfers from his worldwide peer group casting a critical eye over every sward of his daily labor?

John Muir, the West Lincs greenkeeper, is stoic. "There is a certain amount of trepidation involved," he said. "The members complain that the course is better prepared for visitors, but I strive for the same very high standards all the time."

The West Lincs course is typically British Links and was remodeled in the early 1960s by Frank Pennick. It is set between the sea and a railway line and, as with most links, it demands a variety of shots from golfers. It is here that greenkeeper Muir believes the Americans might struggle.

"The guy who can use the wind and play a chip and run game has the advantage over the general American game of target golf," Muir said.

Was this, I wondered, the hardened edge that I had been looking for? Was Muir suggesting that British and European golfers are, overall, better and more resourceful shotmakers on average than the Americans and would therefore claim the first-ever Hayter International Cup?

Not at all, claimed Muir. He said he isn't very competitive and, in any event, his very job demands neutrality.

So, it appears the whole ethos of the event is one of comradely harmony — for now anyway. Perhaps the pinch will come on the first green.

Scotts program

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courses dispense Scott's FFII snow mold treatment.

"We begin applying it on northern Michigan courses in early October and start moving south, ending up in Kentucky about mid-December," Lybarger said. "It's another way to keep our vehicles operating."

Scott has 10 vehicles that service roughly 75 courses. The vehicles are kept busy in the Southeast. "We have some excess capacity in the Southwest," Lybarger noted.



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