

Hurley letter

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researching various aspects of grasses specially selected for use on golf course putting greens. Additionally, I have attended more than 100 professional tour events, caddied on the pro tour in the late 1960s, and worked on maintenance staffs in preparation for major championships.

Frankly, what you hear on TV about "up grain," "down grain," "grain growing east to west," "grain growing towards Indio," and other statements are oversimplified and, in most cases, misleading. What TV watchers need to hear is more, "up hill," "down hill," "side hill," and less "grain," "grain," "grain" from the commentators.

Let's look at the facts about how turfgrasses grow. Some people may have noticed on putting greens, especially on older courses, distinct patches of grasses, most ranging in size from 3 to 5 feet in diameter, displaying different colors and textures. These segregate patches of grass may produce an orientation of leaves and stems in a certain horizontal direction that we call "grain." This "grain" may influence the direction of a putt, especially as the ball slows down near the cup. However, this "grain" most typically grows in random directions when not unduly influenced by a steep slope, water drainage patterns, a strong wind blowing constantly in one direction, or continued mowing in the same direction.

The main point to be made is that on relatively flat putting surfaces on older golf courses, without the aforementioned influences, grasses typically grow in random directions. TV golf commentators use the word "grain" for all descriptions of how the ball may be influenced. They do not relate that an older putting green is typically made up of many patches of grass, possibly hundreds on one green, that may show some of this "grain," growing in small patches, and growing in all possible random directions. TV analysts do not factor that golf course superintendents routinely use brushes, and other devices on putting greens designed to stand leaf blades and stems upright so that this random grain can be minimized or totally eliminated.

It should be pointed out that the myths about "grain" constantly talked about by TV commentators are contrary to what turfgrass professionals know. I have discussed the subject of "grain" with other turfgrass experts and golf course superintendents, and they all agree that grain typically is found growing in random directions on putting greens.

Additionally, with more than 400 newly constructed golf courses being built in the United States each year, most new courses in cool-season climates are selecting the newly bred bentgrasses for putting greens. This "state-of-the-art" creeping bentgrass was developed to grow upright and does not produce grain.

When the winter pro tour hits Florida in February and March, golf courses have dormant Bermudagrass putting greens that are typically winter overseeded using a grass called *poa trivialis*.

My advice to the TV commentators is to find a better word for whatever they are trying to express, like "up hill" or "down hill." This would be more correct in many situations and would be easier to listen to. Thank you.

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East Stroudsburg, PA

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