

Controlling elk damage key to winter prep in Canadian Rockies

By HAL PHILLIPS

BANFF, Alberta, Canada — Here at Banff Springs Golf Club, winter preparation is complicated by the sexual desires of elk. Autumn is mating season for these 1,200-pound beasts, who congregate in huge numbers on the golf course, a 1926 Stanley Thompson design located in a wildlife corridor pinched between mountains Rundle and Tunnel.

"We'll have more than 300 elk on the course every day during the fall, whereas we have only 100 or so during the summer," said Kevin Pattison, head superintendent at Banff Springs. "I have to laugh when I say that; 100 elk would be plenty for most superintendents."

Come Sept. 1, Pattison and his crew routinely segue into late-season mode. There is dung removal — a daily chore with triple the number of elk on site. In terms of man hours, mowing and grooming the greens goes from a 15-hour job to a 21-hour job, because smoothing elk footprints with dry sand and removing larger indentations with mechanical ball forks take time.

"Every 10 days or so, we'll have an elk create a waller," Pattison explained. "What happens is, the bull elk takes his antlers and sticks them into the ground; he rakes them back and forth to sharpen

them up. This is what they do to prepare for rutting [mating] action. Unfortunately, they like to do this on the greens, and when they're done, it looks as though someone has literally roto-tilled an area



Banff Spring GC has dramatic mountain setting, but also an abundant number of troublesome elk



about six feet square. The biggest piece of turf left over is no bigger than the size of my hand!

"We pick each of these waller areas clean, rake them smooth and replace the turf pieces as if we were doing a jigsaw puzzle," he said. "Then we roll it smooth and top dress it very lightly — if you use too much sand, it smothers the plant."

FENCING IN THE GREENS

As you can see, prepping a golf course for winter here in the Canadian Rockies

calls for extreme measures. However, in going to these extremes, Pattison believes he has hit upon several measures germane to any superintendent whose course closes during the winter months.

Traditionally, the elk's rutting season comes to a close by the end of September, and the course closes to play on Canadian Thanksgiving (Oct. 9 this year). That's when the real work begins, though in some ways it has already begun.

"To set us up for a good summer season, we start in the late summer before," Pattison said. "For example, that's when we take soil tests and adjust our fertility program to correct any inadequacies."

"The first week we close, we will aerate the greens, remove the cores, apply a light top dressing, and apply Milorganite to reduce ice damage," he explained.

"Then we'll surround every green with special fencing comprised of mesh panels that are 6 feet tall and 10 feet long. This fencing is unique. The panels are self-supporting, so you don't need to worry about frozen ground or damaging irrigation pipe with stakes. The panels are extremely easy to handle, which is important because we're in there two or three times a winter to clear snow from the greens."

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Supers getting courses ready for cold weather

By JOEL JOYNER

NORTHEAST

FAYETTEVILLE, N.Y. — At the Onondaga Golf and Country Club, superintendent Eric Holm has his winter preparation down to a 'T' after 15 years on the job. With long winters and a lot of accumulated snowfall here in central New York State, Holm hopes for a "consistent snow cover until January and a nice gradual melt" to begin a new season.

After aerating the greens in mid-September and again in a one-month to six-week period, Holm will begin fertilizing toward the end of October. "As far as top dressing the greens, I used to give them a light brushing late in the year," said Holm, "but I found I had too much injury. I've discontinued that and have had no detrimental effects." On the course, Holm maintains five wind-exposed greens with "evergreen wind covers" to prevent desiccation.

In early October, Holm uses a "single-rate application of Scotts FS2 on the greens to prevent pink snow mold." Between the end of November to mid-December, another single-rate application of Scotts FS2 is used on the greens, tees, and fairways. "Generally, when it looks like winter is really bearing down on us," Holm said, "I also apply Scotts fungicide #5 for protection against gray snow mold."

"My greens have a great three inches of 100 percent sand top dressing that I've added since I've been here, so I really don't have to prepare them for any drainage prior to winter," said Holm. "We do a

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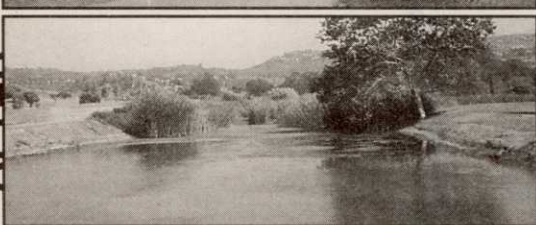
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Prepping for cold weather

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complete blowout of the irrigation system in mid-to-late October, followed by another quick blowout as a precaution against any settling in the low areas."

BRETTON WOODS, N.H. — Superintendent Mark Taylor at the

Mount Washington Hotel and Resort knows preparation is essential for the long winter months and heavy snow fall. With 18-holes on the Mt. Washington course and an additional nine holes for the Mt. Pleasant course, Taylor must deal with several grass types and a tough Mother Nature. "We're a May 1st to Nov. 1st operation, but last May we had three snow storms in the first week," Taylor said.

"I'll fertilize in mid to late October with about a pound of nitrogen and a pound of ash," he explained. As far as covers are concerned, "when I first got here, they had seven or eight greens that were covered with these heavy felt blankets. I took the blankets off because it wasn't too healthy underneath. With as



Mark Taylor

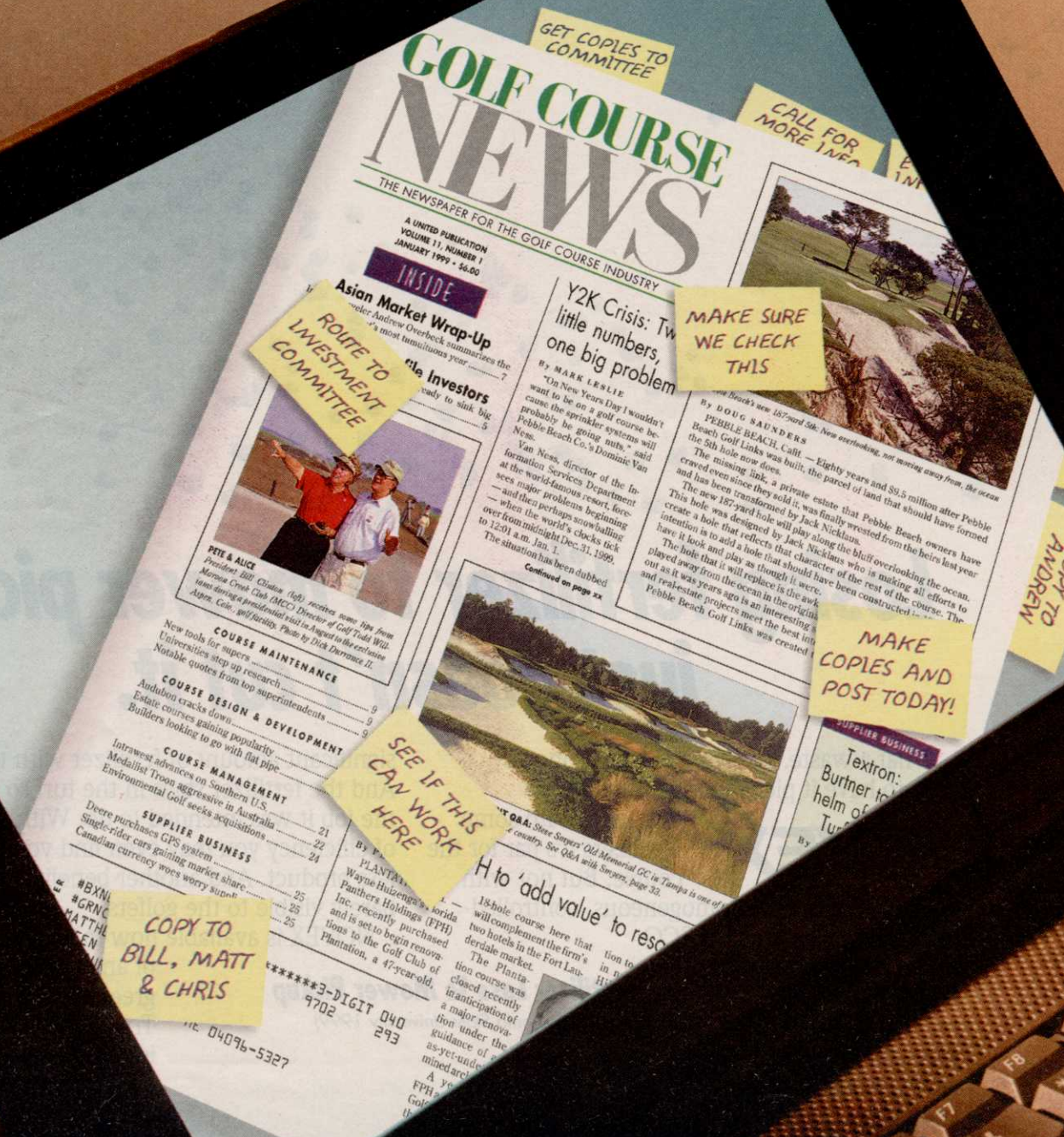
much snow cover that we get up here, I don't see any need, except maybe in the spring as a germination blanket."

After deep-tining the greens last year, Taylor "did a snow mold treatment of Chipco and Daconil at the recommended rates and still ended up with snow mold at select areas.

This year, Taylor will use Heritage around the first of October, and a Chipco/Daconil combination during the first of November.

Taylor will top dress the greens substantially with a heavy dressing and let them sit. After letting the grass grow some, Taylor will let them "go to bed" at about a quarter inch. Though Taylor will have to occasionally get out there to break up some ice, last year wasn't much of a problem for the course. Cross country skiing trails, however, are always a concern. "We've roped off a number of tees and greens," he said.

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MIDWEST

NOBLESVILLE, Ind. — Randy Brehmer, CGCS, at the Fort Golf Resort here, believes his course is "sound and healthy going into winter" after a good summer.

Spreading seed in late August to early September, Brehmer begins his preparation for the coming winter months. He applies fertilizer in the late fall, soon after aeration. He places an application on the fairways in October, and treats his greens and tees anywhere between mid-late November.

"We'll deep-tine the fairways during the first week of November anywhere between 10 to 12 inches," he said. "It opens it up more than coring. We top dress our greens during aeration, and then one or two additional times later on."

As for fungicides, Brehmer explains, "we only use them as a curative basis in the spring, and then only on the greens, tees, and approach areas."

GREAT PLAINS

MULLEN, Neb. — Corey Crandall, superintendent at the exclusive Sand Hills Golf Club, has a different approach toward winter's arrival with his "no trees, no water, no out-of-bounds" course.

Crandall maintains fine fescue grass in the fairways and bentgrass on greens and tees. "We'll top dress the greens real heavy," said Crandall. "Then we'll just spray them with snow mold protection and actually cover the tees and greens during the first part of November."

Also during the first week of November, he will blow out the irrigation system. "We have run into problems in the winter, if we have an open, dry winter," says Crandall. "Last year we had to charge up the irrigation system in December and February. It was really dry. Right after we charge up, we blow it right back out." ■

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