

With spring comes renewed sense of optimism

As I write this, the icy fingers of winter are loosening their grip. The snow is receding, I can see patches of brownish green sward and temperatures are forecasted to reach the 60s this weekend.



Andrew Overbeck, editor

This means two things: 1. My wife and I have reached a détente over the proper thermostat setting in our house (for some reason my argument that, "If it was 60 degrees outside you'd be out there wearing shorts," never goes anywhere); 2. A new golf season is on the horizon.

By the time this issue is published, golfers will be peppering superintendents with questions like, "How come this place isn't as green as Augusta?" But you can't blame them, and I doubt many of you will. After this brutal winter, golfers and superintendents alike are itching to get back on course, eager to see what a new season holds. With spring comes a renewed sense of optimism.

From the Midwest to the Mid-Atlantic to the Northeast, much of the country got pounded this winter. Places that usually don't

get much snow got dumped on: parts of Pennsylvania, Virginia, Indiana, Ohio and North Carolina got 80-plus inches of the white stuff.

The snowfall totals for the eastern half of the country, however, are

welcome news. Groundwater supplies, depleted by last year's drought, have been recharged. Instead of starting the season under water restrictions, this year courses will gladly tolerate a prolonged "mud season."

Golf course operators are looking forward to relieving pent-up golf demand as well. Because of last year's drought and a longer than expected winter, there should be plenty of golfers ready to hit the first tee once courses re-open. This could give many courses the revenue spike they sorely need.

While the Eastern half of the country is counting its collective blessings this spring, the drought situation out West is becoming increasingly dire. Throughout parts of the

Southwest, Mountain West, Northwest and Central Plains, drought worries will loom large this year. Water restrictions are already being shaped in Nevada and many of Colorado's reservoirs are less than half-full, despite higher snowfall totals.

through the season.

We here at *Golf Course News* know that superintendents are a creative lot. Now we're going to prove it. In our new monthly feature, SUPERideas, we will showcase a superintendent and their innovative idea (see page 6). If you



Although the City of Denver has reopened its courses after closing them due to drought conditions in January, it will clearly take much more than optimism for courses out West to make it

have a SUPERidea you would like to share, e-mail me at aoverbeck@golfcoursenews.com. If we publish your idea, we'll send you a *Golf Course News* golf shirt. They are available in three colors: white, white and white.

POINT

Three good reasons to stick with USGA greens

By JAMES FRANCIS MOORE

As most are aware, the tremendous boom in golf course construction experienced over the past decade has resulted in thousands of new courses across the country. Often, these new courses offer the best greens the game has ever seen. These greens enjoy the combination of excellent drainage, architecture that is in keeping with the changes in the game and the finest grasses researchers can produce. Older courses are finding it difficult to compete and many have realized they must update their facilities if they are to keep their existing players, much less attract new ones.

Given the importance of putting in golf, it is no surprise that many courses are rebuilding their greens. When they do, the USGA feels very strongly they should follow the guidelines for greens construction the Green Section has provided for over 40 years.

Our staff is frequently asked to explain why we feel so strongly about the USGA method (or "specs" as many call them). After all, the USGA does not make a dime on the procedure and in fact has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars over the years on scientific research to improve it. There are many reasons we continue to recommend greens be constructed in this manner, with the following three being the most important.

HISTORICAL PERFORMANCE

The USGA method was first published in 1960. Since that time thousands of greens have been built to the method. Today there are functioning greens that were built before the superintendents



James Francis Moore

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COUNTERPOINT

California greens offer many advantages

By DR. MICHAEL HURDZAN

While I am a great believer in the USGA method of green construction, for it is the most highly studied method available, I don't believe there is any one best way to build a golf green and rootzone.

My point of view is a result of 40-plus years of seeing greens built out of every imaginable combination of sand, organic matter, inorganic matter and soil, and yet all of them produced acceptable quality putting surfaces for their time and place. Consequently, I have come to believe that if there is indeed a preferred method, it must be the one best suited to any given combination of microclimate, irrigation water source, turfgrass, construction budget, maintenance goal and golfer expectations – and it is not always the USGA method.

However, as we learn more about the complex interactions of the physical, biological and chemical aspects of golf green rootzones, many more scientifically sound construction methods or modifications will be found to be successful. One of these is the California method of green construction.

A common misconception is that any 100 percent sand green is a California green, and that is simply not true. The difference is the particle size of the sand used for construction. California greens require sand that falls within a very narrow range of particle size distribution. A USGA green falls within a wider range of particle size distribution. So you cannot take sand that is good for USGA greens and deem it suitable for use in California green construction without lab testing.



Dr. Michael Hurdzan

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