

BY MARGARET HEPP

## A-OK

In his first superintendent job, an Oregon native seeds a course close to home and reaps the rewards

Some say hindsight is 20-20, but David Phipps, superintendent at Stone Creek Golf Course, says hindsight is A-1.

As construction project manager and golf course superintendent from the beginning at the course in Oregon City, Ore., Phipps was in the driver's seat for all turf decisions. He chose to seed Tee-2-Green's creeping bentgrass cultivar PennLinks on his greens during the 2001 grow-in.

Once the greens were established with PennLinks, Phipps realized the benefits of other grasses he'd considered that were more tightly knit. He needed a bentgrass variety that would be more effective at fighting annual bluegrass. So, he went back to Tee-2-Green for advice. The company strongly recommended Penn A-1, a creeping bentgrass Phipps eventually purchased and interseeded in conjunction with each aerification. The A-1 has been part of the Stone Creek greens for four years. Phipps continues to spread 1/4 to 1/3 of a pound of bentgrass

seed per 1,000 square feet after aerifying and verticutting. Each application, consisting of two pails, 25 pounds per nine holes, costs about \$200. To apply the seed, Phipps starts by aerifying, cleaning and topdressing the greens, then goes over the greens in a crisscross pattern with a spreader set at a low speed.

"In retrospect, it would have been great to use A-1 from the start," Phipps says. "It's necessary to keep throwing seed in the ground. *Poa annua* freely seeds year round and builds its own seed bank, so why shouldn't we build a seed bank with bentgrass as well? As of now, my greens are probably 95 percent clean."

Since the A-1 has grown in, Phipps has seen a significant change in the texture of the greens, and he's pleased with his new, tightly knit bentgrass. To keep the greens exactly as he likes, Phipps changed his fertilizer applications. He's using more now than in years past, but he's improving quality.



Above: New Penn A-1 roots in the soil profile at Stone Creek Golf Course. Right: Mike Turley, assistant superintendent at Stone Creek, will seed the greens in a crisscross pattern with the spreader set at a low speed. Photos: David Phipps



Phipps and Turley spread 1/4 to 1/3 of a pound of bentgrass seed per 1,000 square feet after aerifying and verticutting. Photo: David Phipps

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"I originally started out using about 3 pounds of fertilizer a year," he says. "At 60,000 rounds a year, the greens take a beating. I had to bump the nitrogen level up, and once I did, I saw significant improvement."

The greens are primarily on a sulfate diet, including ammonium sulfate, potassium sulfate, ferrous sulfate, zinc sulfate and other nutrients Phipps mixes together and sprays on the turf.

"I'm probably applying about 5.5 to 6 pounds of fertilizer annually on the greens," he says. "That's what I've found they require with play, and I can keep the green speeds between nine and 10."

Fungicide applications on the greens range in frequency from two to four times a year, usually to combat summer stress with a Chipco Signature (fosetyl) and Daconil Ultrex (chlorothalonil) mix. It helps keep the greens strong through a heavy wet period.

Elements of weather and frequency at Stone Creek are two of Phipps' biggest maintenance difficulties. He tries to aerate the greens between two and six times a year, optimally opening up the greens every 45 days, but his plans aren't always executed according to schedule.

"I'm always playing a game with Mother Nature," he says. "It's difficult to find the opportunity to verticut, aerate and topdress regularly. Our crew arrives at 4:30 a.m., and they try to seed, brush and mow before play hits us at 5:30 a.m."

Hubbard, Ore., where Tee-2-Green is headquartered, is 15 miles from Oregon City, and Phipps says location alone gives A-1 an advantage over other varieties in his book. Still, while Phipps is content with his A-1 for now, he's always looking for ways to improve. He seeded a nursery with Jacklin's Alpha creeping bentgrass to compare it firsthand to Penn A-1.

"There are some great varieties out there," Phipps says. "I've played some Alpha greens that are phenomenal. I'm not opposed to trying other grasses, but if I grew in another golf course, I'd want to do some further research. Alpha and A-1 are very close."

Phipps has no intention of reseeding his greens in the near future. And though golfers at Stone Creek haven't commented on any difference in the greens since Phipps interseeded with A-1, he considers that a positive.

"The lack of complaints is always a good thing," he says. **GCI**