

## PRODUCT FOCUS

### GREENS ROLLERS

tered very few problems in training.

"We had one guy who fell into a bunker with one," he says. "But that's going to happen when you're getting to know a new piece of equipment."

For members playing the course, rolling made an immediate difference in play. Earlier in the season, Dickerson had queried members about what they felt was the ideal speed of Owatonna's greens. This input served as the target for Van Natta and Dickerson's rolling program.

"We were able to maintain speeds that were in excess of what our target was," he says. "We actually had to back off on stuff because we were creating greens that were like lightening. Some golfers at the club thought they'd died and gone to heaven, but some of the older members wanted to know what we were doing because they felt if you just touched the ball it'd roll halfway across the green."

Owatonna's greens are rolled every other day, unless there's a tournament scheduled. "We have three large tournaments during the year and we rolled two to three days leading up to the tournaments just to get them putting quick and rolling as true as possible," Dickerson says.

Rolling even has allowed Van Natta to skip days of mowing without affecting quality of play.

"You're not stressing the turf and you're giving it another day of top growth, which is going to give you a healthier plant," he says of rolling's benefit to the turf. "And you're still giving the members what they're looking for as far as the smoothest, most consistent putting surface."

In addition to green speeds, another of Van Natta's concerns was keeping the cut as high as possible.

"Normally, people cut as short as they can get with the hopes of getting a faster putting surface," he says. "But in the process of doing that you take away the benefits of a high cut and you have a plant that is much weaker. You're pretty much creating a time bomb."

Van Natta and Dickerson consulted Nikolai's data and learned that rolling could allow them to maintain a higher cut.

In addition to the new rollers, Owatonna purchased a new Jacobsen Eclipse walking greensmower with groomers, which allowed Van Natta's crew to mow Owatonna's greens at 0.141 inch.

"Rolling allowed us to mow at a higher height, and because of the groomers, we're able to keep the grass standing upright," Van Natta says. "This makes each green type not only visibly looking the same, but the quality consistent."

Rolling has provided Owatonna with

greens that are comparable in speed, but are healthy, too. These are important factors when maintaining greens in July and August, Van Natta says.

"I saw the quality of the color and overall look of the greens improve," Van Natta says. "We had an overall better root system, and a more extensive root system means the turf will be harder when it's dry."

#### PLUGGING IT IN

To date, Van Natta and Dickerson have encountered very few, if any, problems maintaining the rollers.

Because they're electric-powered, the units must be plugged in at the end of the day to ensure they're charged and ready to go come morning.

It takes about three to four hours to charge the roller's battery, and that ensures about five hours of operating time if the unit is set at its slow setting. While the roller comes with two speed settings – fast and slow – the faster setting drains the battery at a considerably faster rate.

"From my experience, the faster speed setting only allows you to go faster across the green and does not have much of an impact on the turf compared to the slow speed," Dickerson says. "If it does, then it's negligible." **GCI**

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