

Turf Methods that Make Good in Florida

By JOE ROSEMAN

REBUILDING and returfing Florida golf courses may or may not be interesting to a great many northern greenkeepers but my experience in this sand and swamp or lowland district may prove valuable to those who go south to follow their vocation in that part of our country where only Bermuda and carpet grass will live throughout the summer and neither of which will mat closely at any time unless given constant care and fertilization.

In this country where vegetation of all kinds attains an almost torrid zone growth in the fall of the year, weeds, scrub palms, and a thousand varieties of plants appear to grow an inch or two every twenty-four hours during the rainy season.

It was my experience to recondition a golf course which had never been finished and lay dormant for more than a year. After having been complimented on the condition of the course with the statement that "there is no better turf in all Florida" than is now found on this course, I feel qualified to offer as worthy of consideration the routine and methods employed.

Visualizing that this 140 acres were covered with vegetation, the growth of which was so dense that a man could not travel more than two miles per hour, picking his way through the undergrowth, it is surprising to learn that two months from the day we started cleaning the property, golf players from Boston, New York, Cleveland, Pittsburgh and Chicago came to Fort Lauderdale from Miami to play on this course because it was in better condition and had a better layout than the majority of the courses they had been accustomed to play on in and about Miami.

Employing a crew of 75 laborers to cut with large

sickles, the debris was placed in large mounds similar to straw stacks, sprayed with kerosene and set afire. Branches of trees were collected and the entire property raked by hand. New sand traps were constructed.

The entire course was disked, using both teams and tractors so that the long runs of Bermuda grass were cut and the stolons re-rooted themselves making the turf three or four times as dense as before. The ash from the burned vegetation was spread on the fairways, tees and approaches to greens. Because the grass had been retarded by this wild vegetation, it was necessary to sow Italian rye grass to fill in on the fairways and give an immediate turf for the coming winter months. This rye grass produced a noticeable turf within two weeks and within six weeks from the day we started cleaning, the fairways were almost as green as those on a northern course. We knew, however, that the rye grass would not live beyond May first of the following spring but that the Bermuda grass stolons would have taken root and produced a carpet of grass over all the fairways after the next fall rains.

Water Rushes Turf

Exceptionally large water mains were installed twenty-four inches below the ground and from December 15th until February 15th this course was constantly sprinkled without turning off a single faucet, which accounts for the fact that a good turf was had in so short a time.

All eighteen greens were disked and floated and then a mixture of cottonseed meal, lime and Paris green was placed on them. The proportion of the mixture was:

100 pounds cottonseed meal
3 pounds Paris green
100 pounds lime



Joe Roseman, who, it might be said, is in the golf business. He's pro, greenkeeper, manufacturer and course operator.



Here is something the greenkeepers may see during their convention at Louisville. It's a winter view from the tenth tee of the Louisville C. C.

to each green. The Paris green effectively eradicated grub worms, commonly known as the Army worm, and various other forms of insect life. Bermuda stolons were then planted and rye grass seed was worked into the soil with a gang of spiked rollers. The cottonseed meal and lime stopped the sand from blowing away and gave a firmness to the soil, if you could call it soil, because it is practically all clear white sand.

Having learned that other Florida greenkeepers were using tankage and black swamp muck, the writer decided to use a fertilizer which had given good results in the north, so we applied one hundred to two hundred and fifty pounds of this fertilizer on each green and kept these greens wet for the following two weeks, after which they were sprinkled each night.

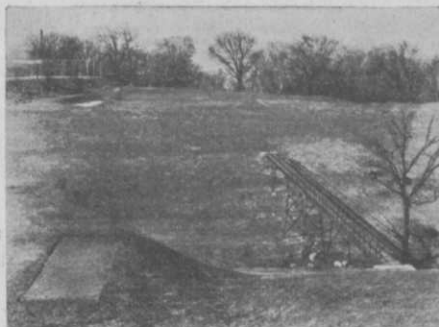
The reader will understand that a new green in Florida, unless it has a foundation of clay, dries out within five hours from the time the sprinklers stop, so we kept the sprinklers working day and night for the first two weeks. The same fertilizer was used on the tees and approximately 750 pounds were spread on each 70 linear yards of fairway.

My experience on this job, which had to be done in a hurry, convinced me if I should ever build a new course in Florida,

I would find some clay before building the greens and if possible secure clay to mix with the sand on the fairways. If one should be able to secure clay for the base of the greens, that is about 12 inches below the surface, 75 per cent of the moisture would be retained instead of passing through the sand as it does and leaving the young grass roots without very much nourishment. Lacking this clay, it is necessary to use as much cottonseed meal, lime and such fertilizer that we could obtain, to make the grains of sand stick together and hold some of the water,

Protect Against Souring

Due to the fact that so much water is necessary to keep the roots damp, the surface of the ground is inclined to become sour from this constant sprinkling but the moisture of cottonseed meal and lime corrected this condition through applications made every two weeks. We always included the Paris green in this mixture to keep out the grubs and bugs.



Another Louisville C. C. winter view. Looking from the tenth tee.

The sand seems to have a lot of food required for turf life, but it is so porous that grass cannot live until it has rooted itself six or eight inches below the surface and it cannot root itself unless the sand is kept moist. Chemical fertilizers are of some value because they seem to make the sand pack about the grass root, however black dirt,

down here, is almost as valuable as gold.

I would say if any greenkeeper can obtain sufficient clay, black dirt or a fertilizer which will make the grains of sand stick together, then keep this so-called soil damp enough to permit of seed germination and growth for about two months, he will have no trouble in securing a dense turf for the reason that the sunshine is there day in and day out. When he has used Paris green in the proportion of three pounds to 200 pounds of cottonseed meal and lime mixture, there will be no bugs, worms or vermin to destroy his turf.

It is natural, however, to expect that angleworms will accumulate as the putting green soil becomes thicker and richer, but they are easily removed and the greenkeeper may rest assured that he has a good turf when angleworms are found in it.

We made another application of our northern fertilizer this last fall even though the Bermuda grass had matted very closely on the fairways, with the result that many golf players who live in Miami the year round are coming to Fort Lauderdale because they tell us the turf on this course is of such unusually good character. A second application of this northern fertilizer was placed on the putting greens and Italian rye grass sown on the greens November 1st to 5th so that on December 1st the putting greens compared very favorably with those on our metropolitan area golf courses.

The sum and substance of this experience merely proves that a good turf is dependent upon having a soil which will retain the moisture; one which is not so light that it can be blown away yet light enough to be aerated, compact enough to permit of stability to the grass root and one having sufficient food to afford sturdy growth of turf. To this combination, add fresh water and the sunshine which is ever present and there will be no secret to growing a good turf in Florida.

You will understand that all putting greens must be reseeded each fall with either straight Italian rye grass or a mixture of Italian rye, red-top and blue grass or Italian rye and red-top only. This seed, if planted and mixed right in with the ever present Bermuda grass at the rate of about 175 pounds per green, will give you a good putting turf from December 1st until May 1st, after which only the Bermuda grass will survive but the Bermuda is thoroughly well matted by this time and gives a fairly good summer putting surface.

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