

GRAU'S ANSWERS TO TURF QUESTIONS

Importance of Accuracy

Webster defines accuracy as "the state or quality of being accurate; freedom from mistake or error; precision; exactness." This will be no full-length essay on the subject, but rather a reminder of the many ways in which the idea, ACCURACY is an integral part of our business.

Herb Graffis in "Hanging On The Lip" (July 1960, GOLFING, p. 3) says, ". . . the sharpshooting small minority of experts place a higher premium on accuracy than they do on distance . . ." Scores of 64, 65, 66, etc., are made possible only by great accuracy in shotmaking so that the ball is positioned for possible birdies and eagles. A single error in judgment can result in several strokes being added, often dropping the contestant out of the money.

Should be Well Read

Recently a huge electronic computer insisted upon spewing out wrong answers. Careful checking revealed error in feeding data to the machine. A "9" had been fed instead of "90". It is said that a rancher in Montana received 1500 invitations to renew his subscription to a national magazine when an inaccuracy was fed to the billing machine.

Crews operating data-gathering flights near international boundaries must be highly accurate in their measurements. Ground crews at our airports must be accurate to the last decimal point to control the crowded schedules of takeoffs and landings without mishap.

Research of all kinds is based upon accuracy. Without it, we could be sure of nothing. Some so-called "research" does great damage by employing faulty techniques which lead to completely false and highly inaccurate conclusions.

How important it is that each putting green mower be set to cut exactly at the same degree of "closeness"! How sad are



Fred Grau, who has been in the National Orthopaedic Hospital, Arlington, Va., on a slow release basis for the last several months, has a green brought to him. It's on a plate at the bottom of the photo, comes from a Nebraska course and is discussed in a Q & A on these pages.

the results when the mechanic is not wholly accurate!

Once we saw some beautiful zoysia on a tee. It was said to have been planted by plugs which were taken out of the fringe of No. 1 green. Examination of both areas revealed inaccuracy. Without double-checking great harm could have been done. The grass around No. 1 green was a low-grade, coarse, common bermuda.

A Penncross nursery was "being invaded by poa." Double-checking revealed small proliferations of "yellow-tuft" which looked a bit like poa. There was no poa.

There is no end to which we could carry the examples which cry out for accuracy. One of the most important is driving on the right side of the white line. A surgeon must be accurate with his scalpel. Let each in his own field strive for accuracy. Observe the leaders among course supts. Note the accuracy of their observations, the accuracy of their procedures, the accuracy of their records. The "secret" of their success is then seen to be no "secret" at all.

Shots That Don't Hold

Q: Here's a sample of soil in our greens. We think they are very good as the grass maintains good color and the ball marks repair themselves rapidly, but they get hard quickly when not watered often. Golfers complain they don't hold a shot when they are not wet. Can we add something to make them hold a shot better when they are dry?

They are about two years old. We haven't aerified them yet because we don't feel compaction is our problem. They were also hard last year. We have only about 100 playing members so the greens are not subject to real heavy play.

Also, we are getting quite a lot of foxtail grass in our fairways. What is the best way to combat this nuisance? (Nebraska)

A: The sample of soil submitted thru GOLF-DOM finally reached me at the hospital. In the future it will save time and expense to send soil samples for examination directly to my office, P.O. Box 8, College Park, Maryland.

The sample you sent is the finest I've received in many years. It was thrilling to see the deep heavy root system so strong and healthy.

In July Golfdom, page 70, (Grau's Answers) it was stated that "Greens that have 8 lbs. of nitrogen to 1,000 sq. ft. worked into the seedbed just before planting invariably are ready for play within eight weeks." This should have read: "Greens that have 8 lbs. of slow-release nitrogen etc." A quick-release N would sterilize the seedbed so that bent would not grow for several months.

The soil is well granulated, open and porous. There is a delightful cushion of dense turf on the surface. It would be inadvisable to make any drastic changes in your management program.

Do all shots fail to hold when the greens are dry? Can the better golfers play shots that hold? What is the professional's opinion?

You are quite right that compaction is not your immediate problem. My first approach to the problem would be to use an aerating machine that cuts clean cores with a straight-in-straight-out motion. The thousands of holes close together will be very helpful in holding a well played shot even when the green is dry. This principle has been proved on championship turf in highly competitive play.

The next step in creating the "ideal" surface would be to top-dress after each aerating, using a blend of your excellent native soil (one part by volume) and a lightweight expanded lava rock product (two parts by volume). Such a mixture would have splendid physical properties for rapid water infiltration and for a shotholding cushion when dry. Three such treat-



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ments a season would be my goal until real improvement has been noted.

Foxtail grass in the fairways indicates that the turf is not dense enough to keep it in check. How much slow-release nitrogen has been used? To what grasses were the fairways seeded? It can be stated that the right grasses, adequately fertilized, will drive out foxtail and most other weeds. Weed killers do not seem to be the answer to foxtail (an annual grass) at least until adequate fertilizer has been given a chance. More frequent mowing should be a big help.

Dirt Tee Compaction

Q: We have dirt tees at our course. After a few days of sunny weather they seem to dry out and pack very hard. It is very difficult to put a tee in them. We were wondering if you could tell us what is a good maintenance program for dirt tees. Are cork mats any good? (Vermont)

A: Cork mats could be one solution to your problem. Another may be door mats made of old tires, sunk flush with the soil surface. Still another is the incorporation of sand to provide a non-packing soil into which a peg tee can be inserted even when the soil is dry.

When all considerations are in, what is wrong with grass? Perhaps you do not have water available for tees. Some vigorous grasses (Merion bluegrass, for example) when well fertilized, will provide excellent tee turf in your area with very little irrigation. Maintenance costs may be little higher than that of artificial surfaces, but player satisfaction would be infinitely greater.

Switch to Zoysia

Q: We have a 9-hole course that is very hilly, with soil primarily North Georgia red clay. We have not had a program for planting and fertilizing and our fairways are pretty bad. We wonder if, with the course in poor condition and with complete remedial action scheduled for no sooner than next year, we should not experiment with Zoysia. Should we use Zoysia Japonica? (Georgia)

A: Zoysia Japonica (common name is Japanese lawngrass) has developed in the 60 odd years it has been in this country, evidence that it will grow and thrive on soils so poor that Bermudagrass gives up in favor of crabgrass and crowfoot (goosegrass.) The answer to your question about experimenting with Zoysia is an unqualified "Yes". You have nothing to lose — everything to gain.

Early summer is the best time to sow the seed. A rate of 20 lbs. to the acre should give you results. Do not expect rapid results as with ryegrass. Coverage may take two years to accomplish. Yes, fertilizer will be of great benefit. Prepare a seedbed by spiking so that play is not interrupted. Do not be concerned about weeds that crop up. Just keep them mowed.



At "Employees' Day" held at Shawnee Inn, Shawnee-on-Delaware, Pa., in July, three veteran employees were cited by Fred Waring (3rd from right). They were Harry Lock, water supply, 21 years; Clarence (Mike) Mosier, groundsman, 50 years; and Tom Cullen, country club mgr., 20 years. Gold pins were given to Shawnee employees who have been at the resort for three or more years. A special commemorative pin was given to Mrs. John Dimmick, whose husband served as Shawnee's supt. of grounds for 53 years before his death last May. The resort is observing its 50th anniversary.

Zoysia Source

Q: After reading your article about Zoysia grass for fairways (Golfdom, April, p. 52), we decided to get additional information from you. Where can we obtain it? Also, the price of it? What time of the year is it best to seed it? (Ill.)

A: Zoysia seed is advertised by Herbst Brothers Seedsmen, 678 Broadway, New York 12, New York. It would be best to write to them for prices and availability. Prices fluctuate depending upon size of crop in Korea and Japan.

Bermuda in Illinois

Q: We are considering putting in Bermuda greens in the near future. Would you recommend 328 this far north or is U3 to be preferred? Which is the best method of planting, sprigging, plugging or broadcasting? (Illinois)

A: In considering Bermudagrass for greens in your climate are you aware that large areas of Bermudas may be completely killed when winter and early spring play is permitted on them? Regardless of the type of Bermuda you would use, you should expect to play on them only from June to October.

Three putting green Bermudas may be considered — U-3, Uganda and 328. U-3 and Uganda are the most winter hardy. U-3 will be the most difficult to get into putting green condition. It is more of a tee and fairway grass.

Broadcast planting of sprigs is best, quite similar to stolonizing with bent. Row planting of sprigs will be most economical of planting material but it will take longer to produce a smooth putting surface.

Regardless of the kind of grass or of the planting method used, one factor of success is incorporation of ample nutrients in the seedbed before planting. This includes lime, P, K, and up to 8 lbs. per 1,000 sq. ft. of organic slow-release nitrogen.