

Smooth greens on the Gulf

Although the cool, wet Spring has led to some disease problems, most courses boast fine, very puttable greens.

By VERNE FLOYD

Photos by the author

From Pensacola to Port Arthur, the early May golf play was heavy and the Bermuda was rapidly taking over all greens in the area. Traffic on greens during this period when the winter grass disappears would seemingly make a rough putting surface. However, the even and certain growth of Bermuda keeps the surface smooth and the courses in this Gulf Coast section accommodate thousands of golfers during Spring.

While visiting some of the men who manage courses in the area, we find a variety of maintenance procedures. In each course, one practice was about the same—early to work.

Andy Mortimer, a native Scot with a southern drawl keeps the course in shape at beautiful Lakewood CC at Point Clear on Mobile Bay. Mortimer, past president of the Southern Turfgrass Association, loves his job at Lakewood and makes no bones about it.

Andy seems well satisfied with the success of T-328 Bermudagrass on his greens, but is keeping an eye on Tif-

dwarf. He said that rather than testing Tifdwarf on one of his regular playing greens, he will first try it on a test plot, to see if it meets with the approval of the club. He noted that Tifdwarf putts quite differently from T-328.

Construction is underway at Lakewood on nine new holes, which will make 27. Frank Batto is supervising construction for Joe Lee, architect. Mortimer does not envy Batto his job there, because the new nine will be carved out of low-lying woods and trying to get good drainage in this area will create many problems.

Another Lakewood Country Club, this one at New Orleans, built a new course six years ago after leaving the old layout across the river. Reese Coltrane, superintendent at both places over a period of 32 years, has dealt with below-sea-level land and come up with a fine course where the New Orleans Open is played each year. The greens and fairways are in T-328 Bermuda. Coltrane likes 328 as a fairway grass and mows it every other day.

A problem we saw on some courses in the low-lying New Orleans area was keeping a uniform surface on fairways. The soil is silty and high in organic matter and if you allow it to dry out it tends to crack, with depressions a couple of inches deep forming over large areas of the fairways. However, if the soil is kept moist all the time, this problem can be controlled. Around New Orleans, disease can occur—especially in cool, wet Springs such as this.



Andy Mortimer, Supt. at Lakewood CC, Alabama, is keeping an eye on Tifdwarf.



At Lakewood CC., New Orleans, Dr. Marvin Ferguson, left, discusses management practices with Supt. Reese Coltrane. Below, rain shelter and rest station is conveniently located near three greens on course. Note flags: left, No. 2; center, No. 12 and right, No. 15.



One of the best operated municipal courses we have visited is at Port Arthur, Texas. When the Sabine-Neches Waterway was cut, the soil from the site adjacent to the course was used in making a rolling golf course on flat land. Holding the management reins at Pleasure Island Golf Course here, is popular Johnny Barlow, pro-superintendent. With 30 years' golf experience, Johnny built one course at Beaumont all the way, and well remembers growing up in golf at Beaumont watching the great Babe Didrickson.

The 18-hole Pleasure Island course is of average length. The silt from the canal plus management has grown good fairway grasses. The greens in T-328 are reported by players to be among the best for putting. Several players donate their services to help Johnny maintain this picturesque golf course where up to 300 rounds are played on summer Sundays.

Early rising Dick Tarleton is apparently drawing his share of golfers to his course in Biloxi, Mississippi, as superintendent at Edgewater Gulf Hotel and Country Club. Dick puts to work his enthusiasm for growing superior turf

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Pro-superintendent Johnny Barlow, left, gets free assistance from player Ernest Freidl, at the Pleasure Island Golf Course, (Municipal) Port Arthur, Texas. Freidl reported for work around 6:30 am and will start work at his regular job with an oil refinery there at 2 pm.



Dick Tarleton, Supt. Edgewater Gulf Hotel and CC, Biloxi, Miss., and assistant behind him wait for these early morning visitors to leave before starting work.

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grasses. Last Fall he overseeded the T-328 greens to a mixture of Rye, Highland bent and Poa Trivialis, which proved to be a fine putting surface.

On our visit, May 11, the overseeding was almost entirely gone with Bermuda taking over. Tarleton's work on a smaller course in the Mississippi Delta provided a valuable experience for him in the management of larger courses to come. Two old courses and one under construction are located in Biloxi. Golfing tourists flock here by the thousands

and enjoy in the meantime looking at one of the world's most beautiful waterfront drives, on the Gulf of Mexico.

Claydon Attridge in his long experience at Pensacola Country Club has virtually built the golf course. The course in May was well groomed and showed no bad effect from the traffic of the Pensacola Open played a few weeks before. J. B. Collins, the superintendent, has done a particularly good job on traps. As with many of the older courses, Poa annua has increased in the turf and Claydon says he has learned to live with it and really does not object too much to its presence. The large trees throughout the course help to make it one of the most scenic of the deep south.

The uniformly smooth transition from winter grass overseeding to the summer Bermuda was a feature of all the courses visited. They lie more or less in the same geographical latitude and there's no problem of the spotty reappearance of Bermuda, due to some of it dying out in winter, as is experienced on many courses in the Mid South. •



Golf Professional Claydon Attridge, right, and Supt. J. B. Collins, Pensacola CC, Pensacola, Florida, agree that the greens do not show any adverse effect from the heavy traffic during the recent Pensacola Open.