

# From Bermuda grass to bent

By VERNE FLOYD

Photos by the author

**T**welve years ago in North Carolina not a single golf course east of the mountains had bentgrass greens for year round play. Today in the Piedmont and Sandhills of the state some 21 courses have all greens in bentgrass. In this transition zone of the mid-south it has long been argued by a few proponents of the cool-weather grasses that this area could have successful bent greens and it is beginning to look like these few are winning their point.

Although the first course (Pinebrook Country Club, Winston-Salem) went all the way with bent greens 12 years ago, it has been only in the last six years that the majority of the courses established

these grasses using bent. One factor causing the change of grasses and management of golf greens may for the most part be attributed to the dissatisfaction of the players waiting for Bermuda grass to take over following rye and other temporary winter grasses. Much has been written about why the dormant Bermuda grasses died out in spots. Actually the main topic for discussion about golf greens centered around these bare spots which in some places never fully covered until August or about 6 weeks before seeding again to winter grasses.

Another most important economic factor influencing the change to bent grass



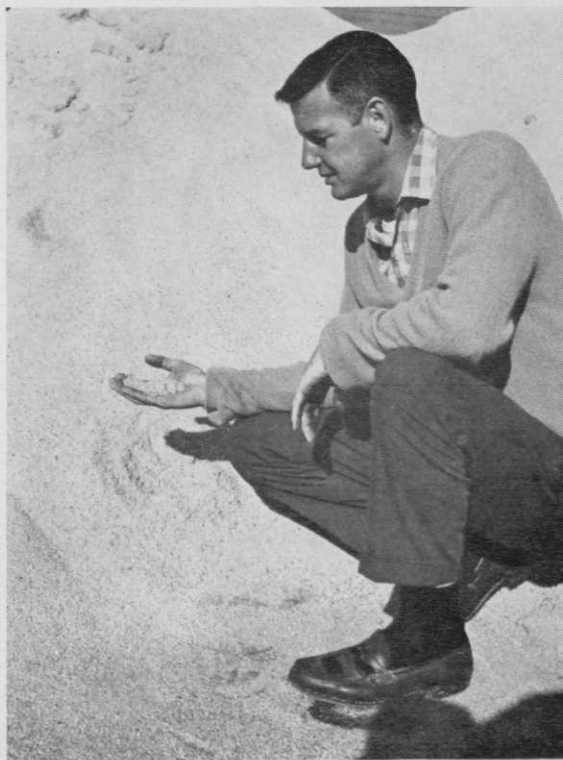
*Brushes on mowers used at Carlson Farms. These improve appearance of bentgrass, are used on most Penncross greens in N.C.*

*The trend towards bentgrass greens in the 'Transition Zone' seems very successful.*

must have been the cost of playing better greens elsewhere during the changover twice per year; cost of seed, topdressing and sleeping pills for the golf course superintendent.

Today in visiting the Golf Superintendents who manage bent grass greens in the marginal areas there appears with few exceptions a feeling of greater security among them than we have found in visiting the same men while they managed Bermuda greens. However, at one golf course it appears that the mistake of planting T-328 Bermuda on the fringes of all greens resulted in the Bermuda engulfing the C-1 and C-19 bents. Whereas this course has enjoyed

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*Supt. Withrow shows sharp, coarse sand used to make up greens, traps and in topdressing.*



*Green planted 12 years ago to C-1 to C-19 stolons. Light areas are Bermuda covered with Poa Annua, problem on several courses.*

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fine play on bent for a good number of years the time has now come that the greens are over 50 percent Bermuda.

Common Bermuda planted well back from bent fringes does not encroach so rapidly as the T-238. Also the common Bermuda is coarser and can more readily be seen and controlled during the growing season as it enters the bentgrass. For the Piedmont region, Bermuda will likely remain a control problem.

Summer fungicide applications to bentgrass greens far exceed the costs and care in so maintaining Bermuda grass. The same may be said of the irrigation comparison due to the frequency of watering

necessary for bent.

Homer Withrow, golf course superintendent at Carlson Farms Country Club, Greensboro, N. C. sizes up the situation for successfully growing bent by saying that "first of all we must have a good foundation with adequate drainage to grow it, along with sufficient water. It being understood of course that essential practices of thatch control, spiking, aerifying, spraying and brushing must go on."

Fred MacKey, a golf course supplier from Richmond, Virginia said in 1945 that golf courses in the area described should all be using bentgrasses, and Ellis Maples, in building Pinebrook Country Club in 1954 started the trend.

*Supt's with bent green's agree—water must be there when needed.*



*At Whispering Pines GC, N.C., in the Sandhills, Linwood Harmon, supt., shows heavy root penetration in plug taken from bentgrass green.*



*Thirty-six years ago, Alexander Harris took over as supt. of Princess Anne CC, Virginia Beach, Va. For 18 years, he used bentgrasses on the greens. Three varieties of bent planted originally. He now works toward Penncross. Note various shades of grass.*