

long time. How do you feel about it compared to natural turf? (Ohio)

A—My experience has taught me many things. Among them are: 1) There are some areas devoted to intensive use where natural turf will never make the grade. These include practice and teaching tees where space is limited; athletic fields where practice and play must take place, including band practice; and play areas, such as covered domes, where light intensity is too low to support growth. 2) Many intensive use areas are built so that natural turf has two strikes against it from the start. 3) With few exceptions, important turfgrass areas are not intelligently managed.

Serious sober consideration of these factors (and others) can lead only to the conclusion that artificial turf will be used in those intensive use areas where natural turf fails for one reason or another. In discussing this subject with Dr. Joseph Duich, he asked, "Have you ever calculated what it costs to dry-clean football uniforms when all they have to practice and play on is mud?" Apparently the money spent for dry cleaning would make a handsome down payment on artificial turf.

Make no mistake, I am utterly devoted to natural grass turf, but I know when to be realistic. Also, some of the artificial turf I've examined is for the birds. The manufacturers still have some homework to do.

Q—We have a putting green that is close to the pro shop. Naturally it gets more than its share of traffic. When it was built it got the short end of soil amendments and, of course, it gets very hard. Drainage is all to the center and front. In addition it is surrounded on three sides by large trees (mostly oak). What management aides can you suggest? (Maryland)

A—Fortunately I know better than to suggest tree removal and rebuilding (the obvious) because that program would not be tolerated. 1) Hand water only, never use set sprinklers. 2) Keep soil open by punching or aerating as often as needed. Work in sand and calcined clay. 3) Cut tree roots with trencher or root cutter. 4) Fertilize lightly with gentle slow-release materials. 5) Overseed as needed with Penncross bent. 6) Use hydrated lime at one-half pound to 1,000 square feet as needed to reduce alfae. 7) Keep potash up to stiffen grass and to minimize disease and 8) Skip a mowing now and then. □

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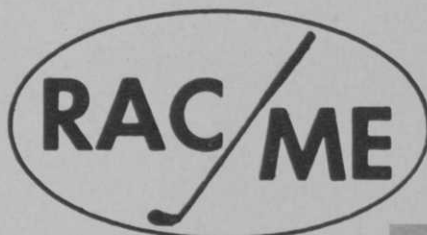
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