

Real-Life Solutions

■ GENEVA GC, GENEVA, ILL.

Superintendent Gives Thumbs Up to Burn-Down Herbicide



Product proves to be fast, simple and cost-efficient

Ed Braunsky, CGCS of Geneva GC, set out to ban the bentgrass and *Poa annua* from his course.

Problem

The playing surface at Geneva GC had become inconsistent because of bentgrass and *Poa annua*. With a centennial celebration coming up, something had to be done.

Solution

Strip down to a seedbed with the help of Basamid, a granular burn-down fumigant, and reseed.

Most superintendents are delighted to have a healthy stand of either bluegrass or bentgrass, but few are happy to have both.

Add *Poa annua* to the mix and the situation becomes highly unsatisfactory because it results in inconsistent playing conditions.

The problem

Superintendent Ed Braunsky faced this undesirable situation last summer as Geneva GC approached its 100th anniversary. Braunsky was determined to ban the bentgrass and the *Poa annua* from his Geneva, Ill.-based course before the cen-

tennial celebration took place.

Braunsky decided his best option was to strip down to a seedbed and reseed the 12-acre area on his course. He consulted the USGA Green Section, which issued a formal recommendation in a Turf Advisory Service Report.

Solution

The USGA recommended a granular fumigant, Basamid, manufactured by BASF AG, to use as a burn down. Unfamiliar with the product, Braunsky consulted Bruce Branham, an associate professor of turfgrass science at the University of Illinois, who confirmed USGA's recommendation.

Braunsky decided to try the product, but he wanted to test Basamid before applying it on his course.

Branham assembled a 4-foot-by-4-foot test plot near the maintenance building on the course. He was impressed with what he saw.

"You could watch it take out the vegetation," he says of Basamid. "There was a visible difference in two days and again in four days. That's why I took pictures when we began the renovation. I wanted to document how effective it was."

Braunsky's meticulous preparation of the course prior to applying Basamid had much to do with the product's success. Before getting started in mid-August, the crew cleared the green and tee areas of flags and markers, and posted signs that the course was closed. They outlined the renovation areas with paint and mowed the fairways to one-half inch. All clippings were blown into the roughs and cut with a rough mower.

Low areas of the fairway were filled with fresh soil and rolled to the proper grades. Sprinkler heads were flagged. The fairways were aerated and cores removed. And, finally, signs were posted warning that

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Basamid was being applied. "If you expect anyone to ignore those signs, you should install a fence," Braunsky says.

The superintendent and his crew spent two days applying 2.75 pounds per acre of Basamid with a drop spreader.

"It's important to immediately water (the treated area) for 15 minutes to activate the material," Braunsky notes. "And make sure no one enters the area for 24 hours."

Braunsky watered the treated area for 15 minutes three times a day for the next five days to create a water seal that kept the

product in the root zone.

By the end of August, the seedbed was ready to seed, which Braunsky ac-



complished with a slit seeder, applying starter fertilizer and immediately watering. He chose several low-mow seed varieties, all of which ranked highly on the National Turfgrass Evaluation Program studies.

The grass began to emerge seven days later, and



(Right) Basamid is applied using a spreader set at 25. (Left) Watering the area creates a water seal to keep Basamid in the root zone.

the course was mowed five times before the beginning of November.

Outcome

His course isn't in perfect condition, but Braunsky was pleased with the results of Basamid. He was also happy with the final cost for the project.

"To look at what we accomplished with \$24,000 when any other approach would have cost a minimum of twice that and could have run into six figures ... that's pretty amazing," he says. "Add to that how fast and relatively simple it was and, yeah, I'm happy." ■

Tips:

Cup Cutting

Some say it's an unappealing chore, but most will tell you that cup cutting is one of the most important tasks in golf course maintenance. Nobody, from superintendents to golfers, wants to see a flagstick tilting like the leaning Tower of Pisa. "Next to keeping up the greens, it's one of the most important things we do," says Lynn Richert, superintendent of Angushire GC in St. Cloud, Minn., who prefers to cut cups herself.

To become an accomplished cup cutter, a person must first decide which type of hole cutter he or she wants to use. There are different types — from the one you pound into the ground to the one you twist and turn into the turf. Preference has a lot to do with comfortability.

So does practice. "(Cup cutting) isn't the type of thing you can just start to do and do well," says John Kelly, director of marketing for Standard Golf. If you're new to cup cutting, Kelly recommends you learn the art on a nursery, not the front nine.

Richert prefers the twist-and-turn hole cutter, the only model she has ever used. Precision cutting, she says, involves three components: location of the hole in a playable area, accurate depth and straightness. But there's more to the process than abiding strictly by these components, she admits. Richert also enforces a cup-cutting policy.

For starters, she always sharpens a cup cutter on a bench-grinding wheel before venturing out on the course. When she's not cutting cups herself, Richert requires less-experienced cutters to use a small

piece of plywood with a circle in it when cutting. The person places the plywood over the area where the hole is to be cut, with the circle in the wood over the hole's exact location. The person then stands on the wood when cutting the hole to eliminate the possibility of the person leaving unsightly foot tracks next to a cup.

Cup cutters can take one or two cuts from a hole. Some prefer one cut so plugs can be replaced entirely, instead of two sections, which might lead to an imperfect fit. But others take two cuts because they say it's too difficult to push a larger one-cut plug out of the hole cutter's shell. Richert, who prefers taking two cuts, says plug replacement is as important as cutting cups. For that reason, she carries a bucket with topdressing mix to use for resetting uneven plugs.

If your greens are old and don't drain well, you may want to try a cup hole cleaner, designed to remove water from the cup hole prior to inserting a turf plug. If you don't remove water from the cup, it will overflow when the plug is placed back in the hole and leave a brown ring around the old cup. Some superintendents use other gadgets, such as a meat baster, to remove the water, but Par Aide Products offers a tool designed specifically for the task.

While some superintendents and maintenance workers believe cup cutting is a drag, Richert enjoys it. "You get your hands dirty, but I'd rather be doing it than riding a machine," she says.

Cup cutting, which Richert performs every other day, also allows her to get close-up looks at the course's greens to check for disease, moisture and damage. "By the time I'm finished cutting cups, I've also fixed about 100 ballmarks," she says.

Cup cutting also requires intangible skills, like discretion. "It's not difficult to teach someone to cut cups," Richert says, "but it's a matter of whether the person will do it with the care you want it done." ■

— Larry Aylward