

Inside The Fringe

Top 10 Golfers' gripes

We asked Joe Boe, superintendent of Coral Oaks GC in Cape Coral, Fla., to list his top 10 reasons why golfers gripe about greens. Take it away, Joe:

10. Aerify again? Didn't you just do that last month?

My response: "No, no — that was two months ago. Remember, we had to put off the last aerification because of the big (insert name here) tournament last month?"

9. Your greens are too slow.

This usually comes from members of your MGA or LGA (men's or lady's griping associations) who are on the traveling team. They have played at (insert name here) country club and the greens were *very* fast. Also, this statement usually comes from the same people who praised "our greens" only three months before when they were stimping at nine.

8. Your greens are too fast.

See No. 9 and reverse the scenario.

7. The par 3s are completely ruined with all of those ball marks.

This gripe is usually followed with, "What are you going to do about this?" What you'd like to do is set up a hidden video camera and film play on the par 3s and then show the tape at the next membership meeting. What you must do is instruct your staff to repair as many ball marks as possible while staying ahead of morning play.

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Trying to Make Peace with Your Poa Annua

By Dave Wilber

Anyone who has ever grown or tried to kill annual bluegrass knows that Poa annua can speak. It leans across the table and vows to be yours forever. Then there are the days when it declares absolute hatred for you and promises to fill your earthly existence with daily hassles should you be stupid enough to stick around.

No superintendents will admit to chatting to their greens when they are alone with them. But to ask what the problem is or to compliment performance is part of the dialogue a super-

If Poa could be grown everywhere, we'd never want to putt on anything else.

intendent can have with Poa in the quiet moments when no one is looking. Only the mouthless Poa is brave enough to talk back if a superintendent is really listening.

Imagine talking to a golfer and trying to explain that after a conversation with several of your pet Poa plants that you've decided not to water for one more day. Such a statement could buy you a trip to a place where the walls are padded and the doors can only be opened from the outside.

The natural selection process that produces Poa provides the fulcrum of

the balance between your love-and-hate relationship with the grass because there's Poa that certainly is the best putting surface you can imagine. It may only be a few square feet, but it demands respect and the thought that if it could be grown everywhere, we'd never want to putt on anything else.

New breeding programs and the possible advent of creeping bluegrass may make that possible. But don't hold your breath because the best Poa plants are the ones in the Reptans sub-type and seed heads aren't an option and may be tough to get into production.

As for the hate side of things, don't forget the last few years of guaranteed Poa killers, sold under all kinds of auspices to get you to do something — anything — to rid yourself of the stuff. In the name of battle, some have suited up and gone to "The Annual Bluegrass Wars."

Regardless of its proven ability to naturally select, the battle is on. For some, Poa must die. If it does not, the vow is to return another day with a bigger cannon to shoot. Now we hear of people waiting patiently for bentgrass that's resistant to non-selective herbicides, which would be a big gun to bring to battle.

Still, some are called to protect the Poa from cruelty. They coddle it, sing to it, feed it special food, groom it with special tools, give it light, extra water, shade, blankets for warmth and

simply let it be known that no Poa will be sacrificed on their watches.

In modern times, we have educated the golfer more about Poa annua than we should have. Recently, a green committee chairman was pontificating to his

superintendent and I about how bad Poa is and how the club should get rid of it at any cost. I couldn't resist to ask him to show me his favorite few square feet of the green we were standing on. I also asked him to show me his least fa-

vorite square feet. He picked Poa annua patches in both cases — and he didn't even hear the grass talking to him.

Wilber is an independent agronomic advisor and a Golfdom columnist.

One Man's Graceful Green Complex Is Another Man's ...

Golf course architect Desmond Muirhead has been called the Salvador Dali of design. The 77-year-old is known to use greens, bunkers and water to create outlandish holes that people either admire or abhor. (Below, right) One of

Muirhead's most well-known designs is No. 7 at Stone Harbor GC, known as Clashing Rocks.

"The symbol came from my subconscious, where it had probably been hanging around for a great many years," Muirhead explains. "According to Jungian psychology, it is a mandala, a sanskrit word meaning perfect circle which is the most common archetype drawn in psychoanalysis. The central form is female and the jagged forms are male."

The No. 6 hole at Muirhead's Shinyo, Japan, course (below, left) — where the bunker in front of the green is in the shape of a Japanese fan — is also a popular design. So is the 10th, or Dragon Hole (bottom), at Oak Village near Tokyo.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF DESMOND MUIRHEAD

Bits and Pieces ... and Problems

KNOW THE SOURCES OF FINE SOIL PARTICLES THAT IMPEDE DRAINAGE ON GREENS

You know that greens live and die by their drainage characteristics. Simply put, poorly drained greens are lousy putting surfaces, and well-drained greens are good putting surfaces.

But even the best-draining greens can fall victim to fine soil particles from silt or clay introduced via irrigation or topdressing. Poor drainage leads to disease, poor root growth and greens that can't support a lot of play. All of this adds up to lost business and possibly your job.

So to keep your greens looking good and putting well, you may want to know a few things about the origin of fine soil particles. Here are a few things to consider:

- Your irrigation system could be a source of fine soil particles. Many golf courses have holding lakes for irrigation water, which is pumped through the irrigation system to the



If sand used for topdressing is not washed (right), it could pose problems. Clean sand is on the left.

course. If the pump intake picks up clear water, there's no problem. But if the intake is located near the bottom, it may suck up fine soil particles and carry them to the greens.

- Dirty topdressing is a source of fine soil particles. If the sand used for topdressing is not thoroughly washed, it may be a problem. When a green that has been topdressed with dirty sand is watered, the fine particles wash off the sand and eventually

slow down drainage.

- Organic matter from topdressing is also a source of fine soil particles.

- The uncontrollable natural fallout of particulate matter from the atmosphere also may add fine particles to the green.

The solution: Keep your inputs — water and amendments — clean and your putting surfaces will stay green.

— William Knoop

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6. Why are we rebuilding the greens when they look so good?

Because they are 13-year-old, mutated-beyond-imagination Tifdwarf greens. And the reason they look so good is because they are overseeded — and you can't see any bermuda!

5. You shouldn't have overseeded the greens this year.

This gripe comes: A) when you are transitioning in the seed; B) when you are transitioning out the seed; or C) from players in the afternoon twilight league who experience Poa trivialis that's getting long in the tooth.

4. You should have overseeded the greens this year.

This one comes when: A) Mr. or Mrs. Doe is invited to play at (insert name here) country club and discovers that "the maintenance staff there mows with walking mowers and the greens look like checkerboards"; or B) when it has been cool enough for long enough that your bermuda is purple and slick and stimping at 10.

3. That pin placement on No. 12 today was downright illegal!

What you want to say is, "The USGA gives recommendations, not rules, on pin placements — you idiot!" But what you must say is, "I'm very sorry for that pin placement, and I will fire the person responsible for it immediately (remember, the complainant may be the president of your course some day).

2. How come our greens aren't like the ones at (insert name here) country club?

Well, that club has a larger budget by \$500,000, has eight more employees and a \$50,000 initiation fee. Shall I continue?

1. I was watching the PGA tournament on TV and the (insert name here) course's greens looked healthy and tidy when cut short.

My response: I was watching the British Open in August, and I think our roughs would look healthy waist deep.

If you'd like to add to Joe Bo's list of gripes, you can e-mail him at SwampTh101@aol.com. Golfdom will gladly print your gripes in an upcoming issue

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