



# Cleaning House

Basamid® proves to be a cost-effective and safe way to prepare fairways for renovation

**T**he 100-year-old fairways at Rockford CC in Rockford, Ill., showed their age. The original bentgrass fairways had become a hodge-podge of bentgrass, bluegrass and *poa annua* that the members found unacceptable. In addition, the mismatched grasses increased the susceptibility to disease and weed growth, leading the green committee to the following decision: The fairways had to be renovated.

Mitch Hamilton, assistant superintendent at the course, says former superintendent Dan Wyatt had tried to overseed for years with bentgrass in an attempt to crowd out the nuisance grasses — to no avail.

“Dan knew he was fighting a losing battle,” Hamilton says. “He was excited when he finally got the go ahead to do a total renovation.”

But Wyatt didn't want to reseed the fairways with the 50-50 mix of L-93 and Providence bentgrasses only to have the same *poa* and other weed problems rapidly re-emerge. The key was to find a cost-effective, safe soil fumigant that would eliminate enough of the weed seeds to prevent an immediate reinfestation.

## The problem

Hamilton says the effects of the brutal summer of 1999 proved to be the undoing of the fairways. The hot, dry summer killed large patches of the turf, leaving parts of the fairways unplayable. The lack of moisture also left the fairways susceptible to diseases. In the end, it was time to do something about them. “That summer clearly showed the members why the mix-and-match grasses we had on our fairways just weren't a long-term solution,” Hamilton says.

To oversee the renovation, Wyatt hired Lohmann Golf Designs in Marengo, Ill., to create the master plan. Wyatt



knew that he would first have to kill the grass menagerie and then sterilize the soil. The first step was easy: He sent Hamilton to each of the 18 fairways with an applicator filled with RoundUp®.

“That was the hardest part for me,” Hamilton says. “I'd been taught all along that it was my job to keep the grass alive. Now I was killing it all.”

The RoundUp stayed on the fairways for 10 to 14 days, Hamilton says. After Lohmann's crew rototilled the soil six to eight inches deep, it was time for the soil sterilization.

Popular products, such as methylbromide and Vapam®, had worked for other superintendents, but those products raised environmental concerns. Wyatt wanted something that would be safe to the workers and would minimize the course's downtime.

## The solution

Lohmann Golf Design told him about BASF's Basamid® soil fumigant. Basamid is a granular soil fumigant activated by water (see sidebar). Hamilton says it's easy to use because any crew member that knows how to operate a drop-spreader can apply it. Since he could do the job himself, the labor savings practically paid for the product itself.

“With some of the gases, you have to hire outsiders to



The crew at Rockford CC in Rockford, Ill., started by killing off the hodge-podge mixture of grasses. Then they hauled away the top layer of soil (left). Then, they regraded the fairways (below) and applied the Basamid. Once they were sure the soil was sterile, the crew added topsoil and seeded the fairways (right).



come in to put it down because you need a special license," Hamilton says. "The BASF product was so easy that we were done in almost no time."

Hamilton says that he, Wyatt and other crew members diligently watered the product into the soil for five to seven days before they reseeded. Then they waited for the grass to come in. Hamilton says the results have been excellent — gone are the fairways with three different types of grasses and numerous weeds.

"From what I've seen, the grass that has come up has been practically free of weeds," Hamilton says. "You don't have the patchwork look to the fairways anymore. What you have instead is strong stands of turf."

He also says he could tell the difference between the

areas that were treated with Basamid from those that weren't.

After the fairways were reseeded, the members decided that they wanted to widen them. This time, Hamilton didn't apply Basamid® to the soil.

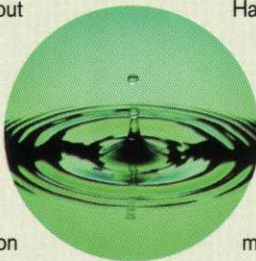
"It's a startling visual difference between the widened sections and those we did originally," Hamilton says. "The amount of *poa annua* in the untreated sections is unbelievable compared to what we redid earlier. It's like night and day." ■

## Just Add Water

Mitch Hamilton, assistant superintendent at Rockford CC in Rockford, Ill. says superintendents can't underestimate the importance of water in activating Basamid®. In fact, without the addition of water, the product won't even work.

"It works when the water, product and soil are in contact with each other," Hamilton says. "If those three elements aren't working together, then you've wasted your money."

According to BASF, which manufactures the product, the first three days after the initial application are critical. Hamilton says superintendents should keep the soil damp without putting so much water on it that it puddles. If too much water is applied, it will wash the product away before it has a chance to work. He says you don't have to depend on an auto-



matic irrigation system to do the job adequately.

"Even with the most sophisticated system, there will be environmental factors that you can't control with an irrigation system,"

Hamilton says. "Wind is the biggest factor. It can blow the water around so that it's not even hitting the proper area."

At Rockford CC, the crew syringed the fairways three times a day for five to 10 minutes each time (syringing timing may differ for other soil characteristics). They started at 5 a.m. with the first application and ended each day at 7 p.m. with the third. That formula activated the Basamid so well that the newly seeded fairways have little weed activity in them.

"If you're not willing to put the effort into applying the water, then you should strongly consider another product," Hamilton says. "You have to make the commitment to doing this correctly."