

Inside The Fringe

A Cup of Class

The little things can make a big difference in a superintendent's quest to achieve great-looking greens. That includes painting cups to get the "tournament look."

Todd Voss, superintendent of Double Eagle GC in Galena, Ohio, has discovered that painted cups equal class. "A fresh set of painted cups are installed every Friday morning on our course," says Voss, who became superintendent at Double Eagle in 1996 and continued the cup-painting procedure introduced in 1991 by former Double Eagle superintendent Terry Buchen.

A Double Eagle crew member sets aside three hours on a rainy day every month to repaint four sets of cups. First, the worker dips each individual cup into lacquer thinner to dissolve the old paint. Then he spray paints them with one light coat of white paint. Voss says one coat is better than three coats because

paint chips off cups with three coats just as much as it chips off cups with one coat. Also, cups with three coats are harder to clean.

The bottom line: There's nothing like putting into a clean, white aluminum cup, Voss says.

Jim Knaffle, superintendent of the International Club in Myrtle Beach, also knows the benefits of good-looking cups. For the past few months, Knaffle has been using Hole-in-White, a product that provides a quick method to paint the inside of putting holes. "It paints the soil and thatch from the lip of the cup to the top of the turf," says Knaffle, who recommends the easy-to-use product.

A steel device is positioned snugly over a freshly cut hole. The turf paint is placed on a tool over the device. With a few quick turns of the can, the hole is uniformly colored. The paint dries quickly and is not harmful to grass.

— Larry Aylward, Editor



PHOTODISC

Resurgent Velvet

A FORMERLY REGIONAL BENTGRASS CREEPS ITS WAY SLOWLY ACROSS THE COUNTRY

By Frank H. Andorka Jr.,
Managing Editor

New varieties of velvet bentgrass are extending their reach beyond traditional strongholds in the Northeast and Northwest.

Superintendents are caring for velvet bentgrass in the shadow of the Rocky Mountains and on the shores of Lake Erie, two areas far outside its normal range. In addition, some southern courses overseed with velvet bentgrass (instead of the traditional perennial ryegrass or creeping bentgrass) because it provides a better putting surface for winter players.

Velvet bentgrass is a fine-textured turfgrass that is denser than many creeping bentgrasses, says Skip Lynch, director of the Golf and Sports Turf Division of Seed Research of Oregon, which manufactures a variety called SR 7220. It also tolerates lower mowing heights well, he adds.

Mike Ross, grounds manager at Lake Sunapee CC in New London, N.H., has managed velvet bentgrass greens for the last 10 years. He said it provides a superior putting surface to conventional creeping bentgrasses.

"Our greens roll as true as any I've seen," Ross says. "[Velvet bentgrass] bounces back well from a lot of everyday stresses."



SEED RESEARCH OF OREGON

Seed Research of Oregon is testing plots of velvet bentgrass (right) at Rutgers University to improve varieties for wider use.

But critics have charged that velvet bentgrass handles wear poorly and dies if grown outside of the Northeast and Northwest. Lynch says that perception stems from poor management in the early days of velvet bentgrass development. Velvet bentgrass needs little fertilizer and prefers slightly acidic soils. So when superintendents treated it with the same chemicals used on other varieties, velvet bentgrass died, Lynch says.

That's not to say that velvet bentgrass can be grown anywhere, Lynch says. In the South, for example, velvet bentgrass can only be used as an overseeding option because the summer heat kills the grass, he says. In addition, alkaline soils prevalent in states west of Ohio make it difficult for velvet bentgrass to thrive there, although researchers continue to search for a solution to the problem, Lynch says.

Ice Breaker

IT'S PROFILE TO THE RESCUE FOR FROZEN GREENS

Jack Cronin, a distributor of Profile Porous Ceramics in New England, has made a discovery that superintendents should find beneficial. He has learned that Profile melts ice on greens like a midday summer sun.

As Northeast superintendents learned last winter, ice can destroy greens and fairways. Turf suffers crown hydration, the rupturing of plant cells caused by ice crystals. But several superintendents are turning to Profile to melt ice before it damages turf, according to Cronin of R.F. Morse & Sons.

Northeast superintendents have used organic products to melt ice for years. They attract sunlight because they're dark, and they melt ice. But ...

"When the organic product gets through the ice, it's very susceptible to float to the low area," Cronin says. "Then around June when the temperature starts to rise, the area is growing out of control."

Cronin says a superintendent in New Hampshire was the first to use Profile to melt ice.

"He had done several of his greens with an organic product, but he wasn't able to finish because he ran out," Cronin says. "He went back to the barn and found he had some Profile left over from the year before."

Profile is completely different from organic products, but the superintendent thought it might melt ice because of its dark color. He applied it to four greens on a Friday.

When he came back Monday, the ice on the four greens had melted enough that he used a snow blower to remove it. But the ice on the other greens, where he applied the organic product, was still solid and couldn't be removed.

Cronin says Profile works faster to cut through ice without causing greens to grow wildly in the spring because it's a soil amendment. Profile isn't marketed for melting ice, but several superintendents in the Northeast are using it to do so.

Painting With Primo

Syngenta's scientists are always dreaming up new ways for superintendents to use their popular plant growth regulator, Primo, including the latest: tank-mixing Primo with paint to mark areas where superintendents don't want golfers to drive golf cars, particularly around greens.

Dave Ross, technical manager for Syngenta's turf and ornamental group, says the Primo/paint mixture allows superintendents to mow those areas less often, which means the paint stays around longer, Ross says.

Now if only Syngenta scientists could figure out a way to use Primo that would force golfers to obey the painted marks instead of blithely ignoring them as they so often do.

— Frank H. Andorka Jr., Managing Editor

Five Great Things Said About Green Design

Many things have been said about greens and the complexities of designing them. Contributing editor Geoff Shackelford searched his library of design books to come up with what he thinks are five of the best things ever said about green design from five deceased men regarded as golf legends. The sayings remind us not only of how important green design is, but also how subjective tastes are when it comes to interpreting the architect's work.

"A putting green has features just like a human, or, at least, it should have to be worthy of the name. Of course, there are many which are no more impressive than the vacant, cow-like expression of some people, but then again there are some with rugged profiles which loom head and shoulders above the common herd, and the moment we clap our eyes on one of these, impulsively we murmur, 'Ah! There's a green for you!'"

— A.W. Tillinghast, architect

"I am beginning to think that the idea of flat greens or slightly falling greens is more truly scientific than the American plan of small greens targeted or banked to stop almost any shot that hits them. Only a real golf shot will hold those big, flat or slightly retreating greens; and you may have to exercise yourself between the ears in selecting the shot to play."

— O.B. Keeler, golf writer

"Putting greens constructed with relation to the length and topography of the hole are the making of a real golf course."

— Donald Ross, architect ▶

"There should always be a definite advantage to be gained from an accurate and intelligent placing of the tee shot, or a reward offered for a long, well-directed carry over some obstacle. This advantage or reward can be only in the shape of an easier or more open road for the second shot. When we soak the green with water, we absolutely nullify the advantage which the design of the hole has held out."

— Bobby Jones, player and architect

"... greens to a golf course are what the face is to a portrait."

— C.B. Macdonald, architect

