

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.