

Real-Life Solutions

■ CONTROLLING *POA ANNUA* DURING OVERSEEDING

Puttin' on a Show . . .

... with a little help from pre-emergent herbicide and other cultural practices

BY DEBBIE CLAYTON



PHOTOS BY TODD HIMELBERGER

When John Anderson quit farming in Iowa 15 years ago and moved to Florida when he was 40, he wasn't sure what he would do for the rest of his life. He found his answer after starting to work on the crew at his neighborhood golf course.

But Anderson's neighborhood course wasn't your typical golf course — it was Arnold Palmer's Bay Hill Club in Orlando, host of the nationally televised Bay Hill Invitational each March. Anderson took to golf course life easily.

"I love getting up early and being out on the course in time to see the sunrise," he says. "There are a lot of similarities between farming and golf course mainte-

nance — in both cases you are acting as a steward of the land."

At Bay Hill, Anderson worked his way up to assistant superintendent, taking classes in turf management on the side. Two years ago, he succeeded Dwight Kummer as head superintendent of the 27-hole facility. With 39 employees, including the grounds crew, landscaping crew, greenhouse manager, mechanics, two assistants and an administrative assistant, Anderson strives to keep the high-profile course in immaculate shape.

"Making sure the course is in great condition for the tournament each year is our biggest challenge," Anderson says. "We're open for

John Anderson retired from farming in Iowa and moved to Florida at age 40. He then worked his way up to superintendent at Arnold Palmer's Bay Hill Club in Orlando.

year-round play, only closing the course for one day — the Sunday before the tournament starts each year. We want our members to have use of the course right up until tournament time because they can't play on it that week. But it's difficult to keep up with the ball marks and wear-and-tear before the tournament."

A few weeks before the tournament, Anderson weans his greens off fertilizer and verticuts them ag-

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Challenge

To make sure the course is in great condition for one of the PGA Tour's most popular tournaments. In this case, the superintendent must deal with a timely transition of bermudagrass and a battle with *Poa annua*.

Solution

The superintendent is skilled in the art of overseeding and other cultural practices. Using a popular pre-emergent herbicide helped him control *Poa annua*.

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gressively. He also cuts them lower and rolls them to get green speeds up to 11 or 12 on the Stimpmeter. In addition, he grows roughs taller — up to 4 inches — and restricts traffic to cart paths.

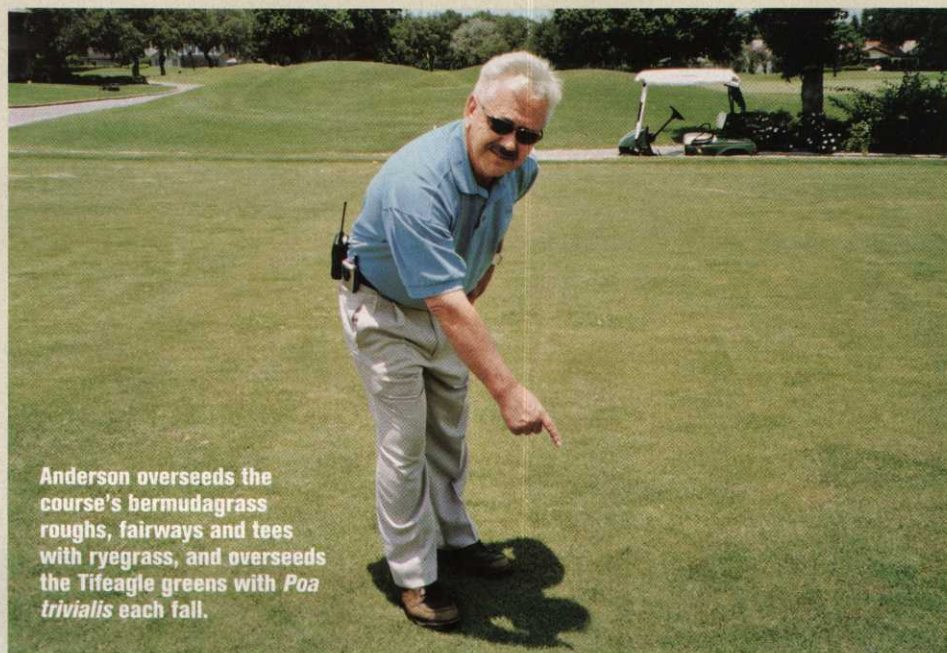
The timing of the tournament means transition is a major challenge each year for Anderson and his crew. Anderson overseeds the course's 419 bermudagrass roughs, fairways and tees with Palmer III Perennial 3 ryegrass, and overseeds the Tifeagle greens with *Poa trivialis*. "Our overseeding is a little heavier than most Florida golf courses because we're on national television," Anderson says.

He overseeds the first week of November each year, reseeding wear areas and ball marks several times

To ease transition from winter grass back to bermudagrass each spring, Anderson scalps the perennial ryegrass to allow bermudagrass a better chance to grow.

during the winter. Prior to overseeding, Anderson makes an application of Ronstar herbicide at the rate of 2 pounds active ingredient per acre impregnated into dry fertilizer on all fairways and roughs. He uses the Bayer Environmental Science product specifically for control of *Poa annua*, which is typically visible in January or February.

"If we don't apply Ronstar as a pre-emergent, *Poa*



Anderson overseeds the course's bermudagrass roughs, fairways and tees with ryegrass, and overseeds the Tifeagle greens with *Poa trivialis* each fall.

shows up so close to the tournament that it's too late to go out with herbicides," Anderson explains. "We've used Ronstar for many years, and it provides 90-percent control or better."

Howard Fertilizer, Anderson's blender, makes fertilizer recommendations based on soil tests and impregnates Ronstar in the

blend. Generally, Anderson puts down 15-3-15 in three separate applications each year. "We use Ronstar in the spring and summer applications for effective pre-emergent control of goosegrass," Anderson says.

To ease transition from winter grass back to bermudagrass each spring, Anderson scalps the perennial ryegrass to allow bermudagrass a better chance to grow. "Most

Florida courses are halfway transitioned back to bermudagrass by the time of the Bay Hill Invitational the third week of March," he says. "We have a difficult time keeping the winter grass going through the tournament and then trying to speed up the transition afterward."

Though the course goes through tremendous stress during the week of the tournament, Anderson credits his crew with bringing the course back to normal in record time each year.

"A televised tournament is a fun thing to focus on, and it gets the entire crew excited," he notes. "They really pull together and work hard before and after the tournament. It's gratifying for them to see the results of their work on TV."

Last March, Bay Hill experienced extremely warm, windy weather for the first day of the tournament, and the greens dried out and hardened. "We had to adjust our water to soften up greens," Anderson says. "Then the last day of the

tournament, it rained the entire day. The tour officials kept play going and our greens took the water fairly well. There were spots of standing water on some of the fairways, but these players are so good, they played amazingly well despite the weather."

With an average of 50,000 rounds per year, Bay Hill stays just as busy through the warm summer months as it does when the snow birds arrive in the fall. The course's three nine holes, the Championship, the Charger and the Challenger, have all been reshaped and redesigned since Anderson started working there in 1988.

"The course has come a long way since Arnold Palmer purchased it in 1970," says Anderson. "And I've come a long way since arriving in Florida as a retired farmer. I like to think we've progressed together." ■

Clayton is a writer from Tierney Communications, which represents Bayer Environmental Science.