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GRAU'S ANSWERS TO TURF QUESTIONS

Zoysia for Golf Turf

What is the role of zoysiagrass for golf turf? This discussion is intended as an impartial evaluation of zoysia in an attempt to weigh both the strong points and the weak ones. At the outset, the reader should be aware that this writer has been deeply impressed by the performance of zoysia since he first saw plots of the grass in 1931 at the Arlington Turf Gardens (now Pentagon parking and access roads). His admiration of the grass has grown steadily through the years.

Zoysia is native to the Philippines and the Orient where summers are very hot and the winters often bitterly cold. It is a grass that has existed under conditions of limited and erratic rainfall and extremely low soil fertility. In the home of zoysia all manures and fertilizers must go to produce food for people. Plant explorers collected seeds of the grass and brought them back to the U. S. around 1900. The late W. J. Morse of U.S.D.A. and soybean fame hired nearly naked natives to hand-strip the ripe seed. Frank N. Meyer, another U.S.D.A. plant explorer who lost his life in China in 1918, has been honored for his part in introducing zoysia by having Z-52, now Meyer, named for him.

Until fairly recently, zoysia has been considered largely a botanical curiosity with little practical application. Just prior to World War II some selections were made from a mixed seedling population. One of these seedlings was designated Z-52 (the 52nd selection) It is now the best-known strain of all-Meyer zoysia.

Seed Harvested

When the U.S.D.A. moved to Beltsville in 1941-42, some 50 or 60 selections of zoysia came along and were planted in plots four ft. square. In 1945 when the turf research program at Beltsville was given active support, the No. 1 project was evaluation of the 150-odd bluegrasses.



If you have questions about turf care, please send them to Fred Grau (right) c/o Golfdom.

Out of this study came Merion. The No. 2 project was zoysia. In 1946 it was found that zoysia seed could be harvested. For the next seven years the potentialities of zoysia from seed got much attention.

Seed yields from small plots of selected strains were calculated to run as high as 1800 lbs. per acre. The Z-73 strain, a seedling grown from pure Z-52 parent stock, was highest yielding. Z-73 seed has produced outstanding turf at several sites.

At Beltsville the 4 x 4 plots of zoysia were located adjacent to a hard packed earth service road (silt loam soil). From 1941 to 1945 one strain spread across both lanes of the constantly traveled road. This was without benefit of fertilizer or irrigation! Another revelation was that crabgrass couldn't invade zoysia turf. When zoysia was planted directly into solid crab, the latter always lost the struggle. Goosegrass (crowfoot or silver crab) also lost out to zoysia.

Plantings Stepped Up

In 1951 and 1952 "Operation Zoysia" was executed jointly by U.S.D.A., USGA green section and Mid-Atlantic GCSEA in cooperation with the late Bill Glover at Fairfax CC. Later this project was extended nationwide. Plantings were made under existing, non-irrigated conditions into weedy fairway turf with no special attention being given to the grass. In fact, it was purposely neglected. In spite of this, the zoysia continued to spread and produce weed-free turf and provide ideal shot making turf.

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It is impossible to mention everyone who is working with zoysia on courses. Here are a few who consider this grass in a highly favorable light for golf turf: James E. Thomas, Army Navy CC, Arlington, Va. (fairways); Bob Shields, Woodmont, CC, Rockville, Md. (fairways); John McCoy, Cincinnati CC (fairways, tees); Taylor Boyd, Camargo, Cincinnati (lawn areas); Don Likes, Hyde Park, Cincinnati (fairways); Chet Mendenhall, Mission Hills, CC, Kansas City (tees); and Frank Dinelli, Northmoor CC Chicago (tees).

In Miami, Fla., a few years ago we got pictures of perfect feed-free zoysia fairway turf growing in white sand. Last fall at Keokuk, Ia., and Quincy, Ill., the best tee turf we saw was zoysia. Other examples could be cited endlessly.

Some Don't Like It

Some supts. have tried zoysia and haven't liked it. Quite frankly, some of the worst turf we have seen has been zoysia — due to improper management. The worst zoysia turf for golf is that which hasn't been cut short enough nor often enough. The grass can't be blamed under the circumstances.

It must be borne in mind that zoysia will grow wherever crabgrass thrives. Zoysia is most "at home" in the "transition zone" where fescue and bluegrass do poorly because of prolonged summer heat. In Bermuda regions zoysia has a real function in providing high quality turf under soil fertility levels so low that Bermuda constantly is overrun with crabgrass and crowfoot.

Our Q & A often must deal with the very practical consideration of making recommendations for growing quality fairway turf in the "Twilight Zone" under soil poverty conditions. Common zoysia seed is recommended because of good performance and economy of establishment and maintenance. It is known that zoysia turf from seed remains singularly free from mat and thatch. Cool season grasses invade it easily to provide green color in late winter and spring.

Shots Not Made From Color

Perhaps the greatest objection voiced against zoysia has been, "I don't like its straw color in the winter". Significantly, most of the objections have not come from the golfers. We have yet to find any grass that provides as many days of perfect weed-free, shotmaking turf as zoysia. Shots aren't made from color—they are made from dense, firm closecut turf. Zoy-



At the conclusion of his South American tour last month, Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Burning Tree CC traveler, slipped into Puerto Rico to play Dorado Beach GC. He's shown on the way to an 87, chipping onto the 9th green.

sia provides the best color with minimum irrigation during the heaviest season.

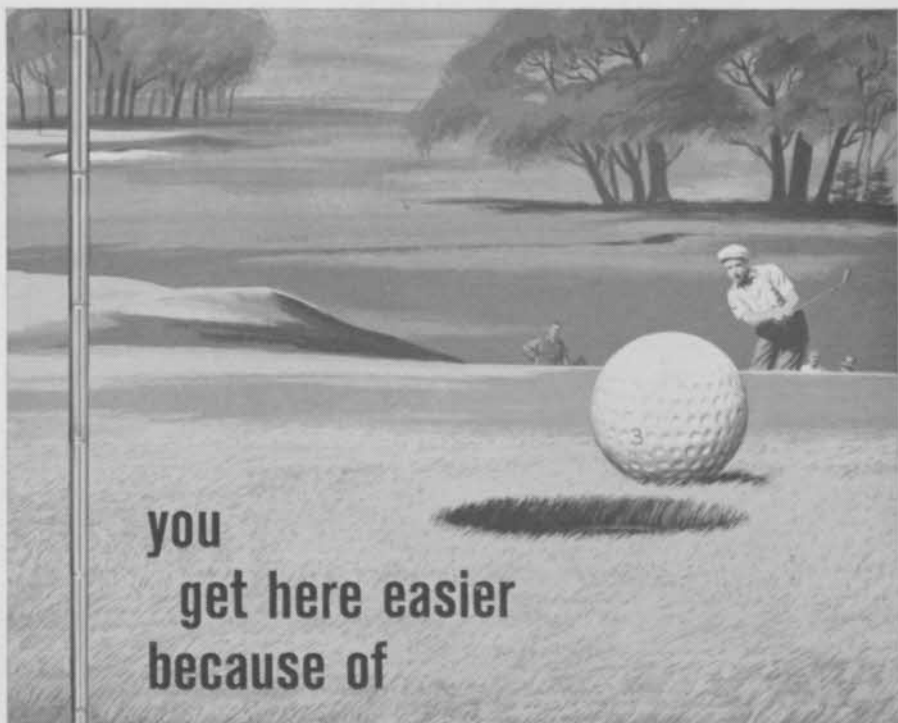
Zoysia usually turns green in spring two to four weeks earlier than Bermuda. Color holds somewhat later in the fall. Excellent turf is produced with both grasses but Zoysia will thrive on about half the nitrogen that Bermuda demands. Zoysia will invade traps and putting greens. It invades more slowly than Bermuda and is easier to control. Zoysia heals scars and divots more slowly than Bermuda but it will respond very well to extra nitrogen.

Some early attempts to grow zoysia turf from seed met with failure. Part of it came from lack of understanding, part from lack of patience. Poor techniques had much to do with the poor results. Chances for success are infinitely greater today.

Zoysia turf from seed is not necessarily superior to turf from improved strains or other types of vegetative increase. Fairfax Country Club has some excellent Zoysia matrella fairways. The disadvantage of this strain is its cost of establishment, limited climatic range and susceptibility to cold. In Japan most greens are zoysia.

This Q & A dept. welcomes letters from supts. who are using zoysia successfully for golf turf. It would be extremely helpful also to receive information on management factors that help to create satisfactory zoysia golf turf. Just as helpful will be letters describing failures and disappointments, and the reasons.

(Continued on page 121)



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Meehan Gives Youngsters Tips on Art of Instruction

Veteran Bloomington, Illinois Pro Says It Takes Five Years to Master Swing Analysis

SEVERAL years ago a young assistant pro who was breaking in under Tommy Meehan, the Bloomington (Ill.) CC headmaster, came to Meehan at the end of the season with a quite obvious note of discouragement in his mien.

"Tommy," he said, "I don't know if I should continue in this game or not. I've been giving golf lessons now for the last four or five months and I'm not sure that I'm much of a teacher. In fact, I sometimes think I don't know the first thing about teaching."

Somewhat surprised at this outpouring, Meehan tried to think of something to say that would at least temporarily restore the young man's confidence. But before he had a chance to speak, the assistant continued:

Happens So Fast

"I'll let you in on a secret. I can stand all day and watch people swing but I'm not sure that I'm seeing a thing. Every-

thing happens so fast. Sometimes I think I spot defects and I tell the pupil what I know to correct them. But then I get to wondering. Maybe I don't see what I think I do and maybe what I tell the person who is taking the lesson hurts his swing more than it helps."

"I wouldn't worry about it too much, Jack," Meehan broke in in a reassuring way. "You're doing all right. Nobody around here has complained about the way you teach."

"Well, I don't know, Tommy. Maybe they are just being kind."

Meehan, who has been in the pro end of the game for more than three decades and at Bloomington for seven years, never had run into a golf teacher, assistant or otherwise, who discussed his supposed shortcomings quite as frankly as this young man, but what the latter blurted out didn't come as a total surprise.

"Teaching golf," Meehan says, "isn't

What Tommy Meehan Says About The Cut Putt

I believe that there are some unintentional "cut-putters" still around, although most golfers today use the orthodox, or standard method of putting. The player who does not keep his putter squared to the straight, imaginary line from ball to cup, finds that when he takes the putter back outside the line in order to stroke the ball, he crosses to the inside line, which makes him a "cut putter."

When the stymie was the rule in match play, the player who had the cut putt finesse and know how, benefited by this method of putting.

Now for an explanation of how the cut putt behaves on the green. The cut putt has a clockwise spin on the

ball as it approaches the cup. If the ball is stroked too strongly and rims the lip of the cup, the spin could take the ball out and cause a missed putt. The cut putter should, or must, putt for the left lip of the cup, allowing for a spin to the right. I believe there is much less tension on a cut putter. He seems more relaxed, is not so apt to freeze, nor does he tend to stand over the ball too long.

Believe me, I do not advocate the cut putt, but personally, I am stuck with it. I will go along with 98 per cent of the top golfers and agree that the orthodox putting stroke is best. It does require the power of concentration, the imaginary line to the cup, taking the putter blade back square to the line and stroking through. —

something that is learned overnight. It takes a good pro at least five years to learn how to look at a swing and see everything that is to be seen. Prescribing a correction for a defect isn't nearly as tough as diagnosing what is wrong."

This is something that Meehan thinks every veteran pro should impress on the young man starting out as a teacher.

"Practically every youngster who starts his pro career as an instructor," Meehan says "is a pretty fair golfer. It's only natural that he thinks of himself as being capable of teaching the game. But it isn't long before perhaps four out of five of these young fellows become discouraged to varying degrees, especially in their first year or two. It's because they come to realize that teaching golf isn't an easy matter. It's the old story of 'It looks easy from the outside.'

Doesn't Come Easy

"That should be made clear to these young fellows before they ever step out on the lesson tee," the Bloomington veteran continues. "A degree in 'golf education' doesn't come any easier than other educational degrees. It takes time, patience, study and observation. Even more important it takes the knack of learning to analyze what is seen in the flashing of a person going through the involved motions of the swing. That is something that can't be looked up in a book. Some people in the golf teaching profession never acquire the knack of seeing the complete swing. Others may master this, but are weak in analysis or in prescribing the right cures for the defects they discover.

"If it is any consolation to young assistants who have doubts about their teaching ability," Meehan continues, "I've been around for more than 30 years and I'm still finding out things about the swing and how to analyze it that I didn't know existed before. I think any veteran pro will admit the same thing if he is honest.

"If there's any message I'd like to get across in this article," Meehan declares, "it is to tell the young teacher not to get discouraged even if he feels inadequate. He can help himself by attending clinics, talking to experienced pros and making a thorough study of the swing. But he should keep in mind that one summer doesn't make or break a golf teacher."

Meehan's Observations

In the 30 odd years that the Bloomington pro has been operating golf shops and conducting winter schools, he has given at least 50,000 lessons. Here are some of



Tommy Meehan

... young pros, take heart

his observations on the art of teaching:

- Most pros fall into definite teaching patterns in which they put special emphasis on certain parts of the swing. This is due either to the way in which they were brought up by the pro who taught them how to teach, or it is the result of their experiences in learning how to properly hit a golf ball. Every pro has what he considers key actions or motions in his swing — whether they are good footwork, good

(Continued on page 108)

LaHer

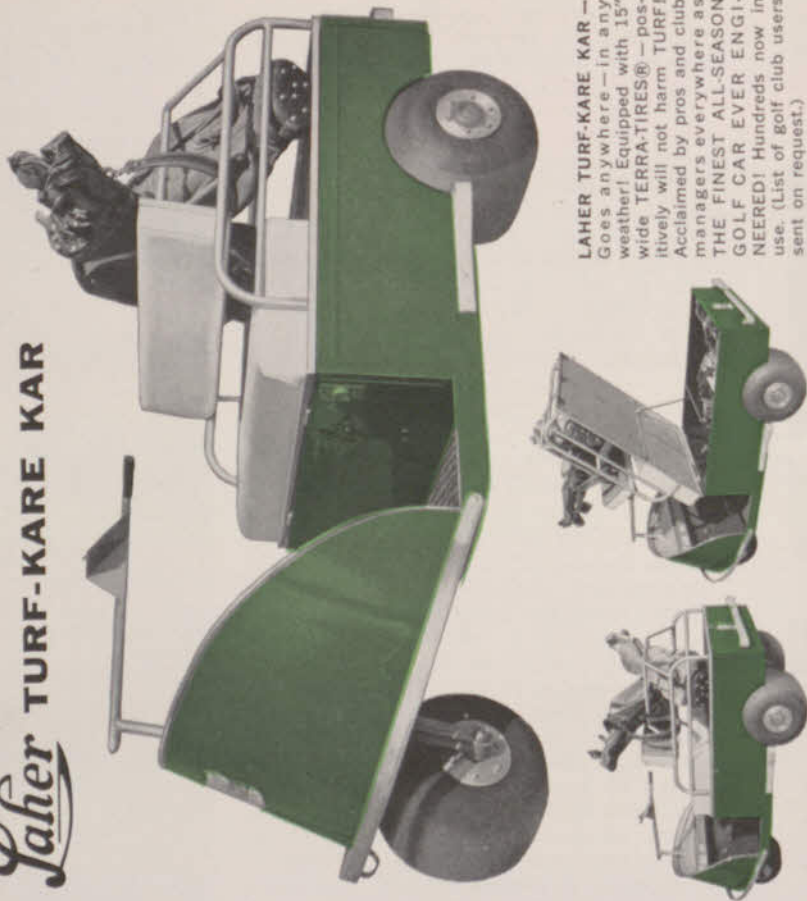
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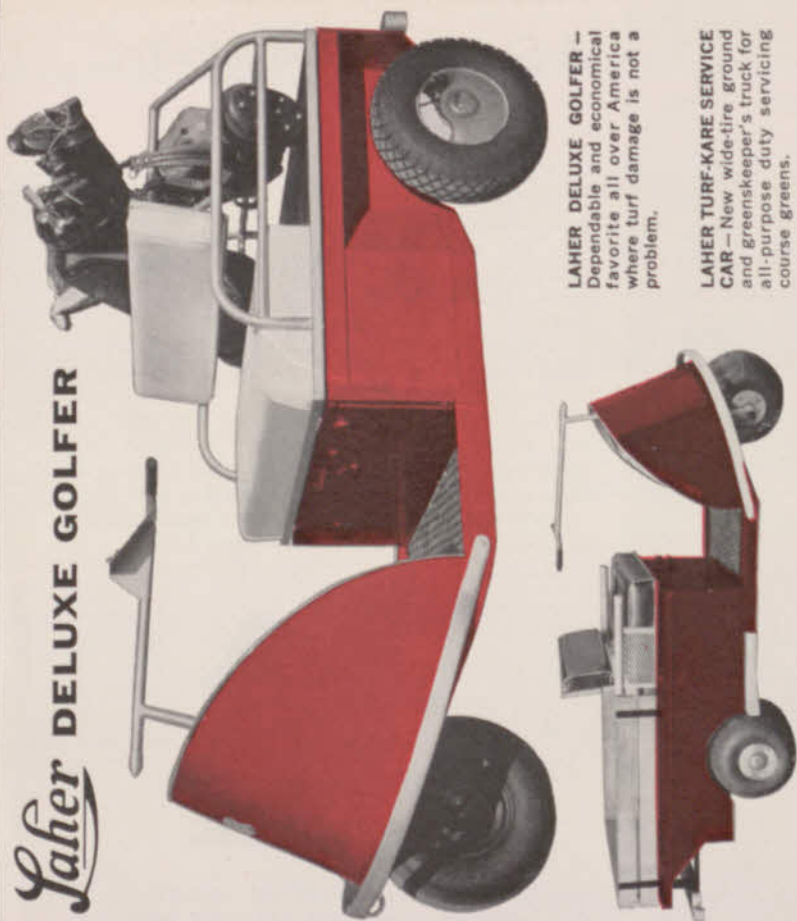
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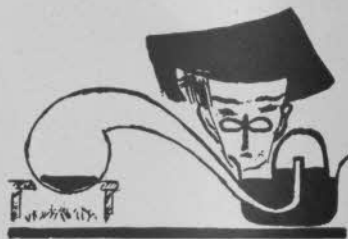
By **WAYNE W. HUFFINE**

Associate Agronomy Professor,
Oklahoma State University

Research in the field of turf became more widespread and intensified in the late 40's and is continuing to grow. This period has been very productive with reference to the development of better strains. Some of these are Pennlu and Penncross creeping bent; Pennlawn red fescue; Meyer and Emerald zoysia; and Tifgreen, Tiffine and Sunturf Bermudas.

Most state experiment stations now involved in turf research have turfgrass breeding or selection programs with varying degrees of intensity in conjunction with other turf studies. We can expect a number of new turfgrass strains in the near future.

Despite the release of the existing new



strains, we still find without exception, that there are some areas and some management conditions where these grasses still leave something to be desired. So there is a continuing need for tailor-made strains, for special conditions of management and areas of adaptation.

Fungicide Development

In the realm of fungicides, Bordeaux mixture was the standard material to use for any "blight" on turf prior to the mid 20's. Then, as a result of research work by Dr. John Monteith of the USGA green section, the use of mercurials in the late 20's became standard. Mercurial fungicides remained as standard controls for turf diseases until the start of World War II when mercury became scarce for non-military uses. Attention was then directed to other materials which could be used as substitutes. As a result of these investigations an organic fungicide called Thiram was found to be effective in the control of brownpatch. This material is still widely