

My Viewpoint "Sand Top Dressing"

by Ray Knapp, Golf Course Superintendent,
Tuckaway C.C.

In southern Wisconsin there is a definite trend toward sand top dressing on greens. Because of the number of courses on a program we are now able to get the answer to many questions we have had about sand top dressing. We are now getting information that indicates amounts of sand needed in our area to maintain a program. Likewise, we are finding the equipment combinations that do a more efficient job.

There are two types of equipment being used to apply sand top dressing. Everyone is familiar with the standard drop type spreader. Some of them are self propelled. Others are mounted on turf trucksters. Examples of these are manufactured by Cushman, Ryan and Sodmaster. In our area several superintendents have used the Broadcast spreaders. Lily is the manufacturer of the only Broadcast spreader being used in our area. This spreader is used with the attachments of a salt agitator and a fast feed ring. With this setup about 2-1/2 cu. ft. per 1000 sq. ft. of sand can be put on at a time. To get more material per application a special feed ring with a large opening can be made using seven inch P.V.C. pipe.

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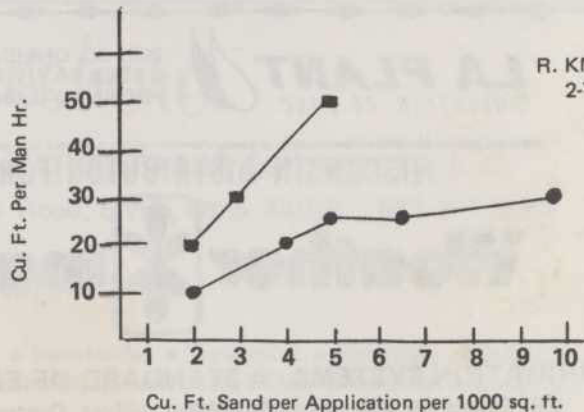


In the future I see a trend towards the use of the Broadcast spreader. Graph 1 shows that with the Broadcast spreader labor hours are better utilized. At lower rates per application twice the cu. ft. sand can be applied per man hour. Other advantages of Broadcast spreaders would be lower initial cost and lower maintenance.

A question that I cannot answer is which type of spreader gives the evenest distribution. From talking to many superintendents I have found that no one is dissatisfied with either type. From this information I'm afraid to guess which types would be best for long term use.

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**SAND APPLIED WITH DROP SPREADER
Vs. BROADCAST SPREADER**



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Graph 1 is based on information from six golf courses in southern Wisconsin. The man hour figure is based on all labor hours required during top dressing to get the area ready to be mowed again. After top dressing the sand is either watered or matted into the turf. This labor is included in the man hours.

I feel that there is currently a trend towards maintaining greens at a no-thatch level. There are many advantages of maintaining greens this way. Less fungicides are needed. On a preventative disease program 1/4 - 1/3 less fungicide is needed. Another advantage when greens are maintained in a no-thatch condition is that no other maintenance practices are necessary to thin the grass other than frequent mowing. For the golfer it is easier to keep the green in a uniform condition throughout the season.

To get to a no-thatch level it may take two years of sand top dressing of 30 - 40 cu. ft. per season. After this level has been reached the amount of sand needed can be predicted as to the amount of nitrogen applied.

Chart 2 shows the relationship of nitrogen usage to the amount of sand required to maintain a no-thatch level. It can be used to a limited degree for budgeting to predict sand requirement. More data will be needed to verify its validity.

From my experience I feel the number of top dress applications are not as important as the total amount of sand applied when a no-thatch program is followed. A successful top



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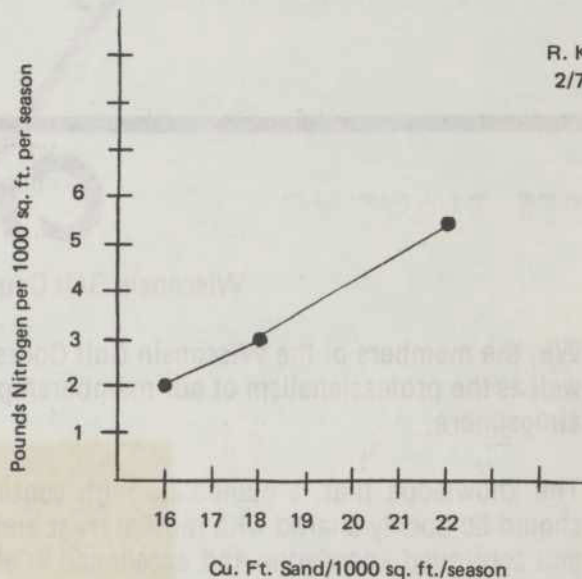
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dressing program can be maintained with as little as three applications of sand per season. Chart 2 could be used to obtain the amount of sand needed per season. The number of applications can then be made to fit the individual club's playing schedule.

In the future we need more information about acceptable particle sizes of sands for top dressing. Currently I'm aware of 6 different sand sources used by Wisconsin superintendents. Hopefully, all these materials are acceptable and will give the desired charac-

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SAND REQUIRED TO MAINTAIN NO THATCH AT DIFFERENT NITROGEN LEVELS



R. Knapp
2/7/78

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This chart is based on Data from three Golf Courses in Southern Wisconsin for bent grass greens.

teristics. Every superintendent should keep accurate records of materials and amounts used. This information may be of tremendous value in future years to clear up areas where there are now questions.



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