

# BUNKER SAND

By Monroe S. Miller

The directors of our Club composed a survey of member satisfaction last year. It was directed by a University of Wisconsin-Madison professor in the School of Business (he is also a Club director) and was very professionally done. The survey covered all aspects of Club services.

The results of the golf course questions pleased me greatly. There was near absolute satisfaction with the condition of greens, tees, fairways and roughs. Only two things received marks that caught my attention.

The first was the hill climber that carries players from our ninth green to the clubhouse. It travels too slowly to suit a number of people. They seem to prefer being launched up hill to the leisure ride now offered. There isn't much I can do about that.

The other area that seemed to merit my attention was sand bunker condition.

The green committee imposed a moratorium on any sand additions to our bunkers several years ago. The better players have been pleased with the results. One of them, in fact, commented late last year that the bunkers were "near perfect".

Since that moratorium, we have been making extensive use of our bunker rakes with the "Maple Bluff modifications". The decreasing amounts of sand and the compacting action of the Bluff rake have really "hardened" the sand in the bunkers.

Problems are increasing for me, however. The sand depths are getting so skinny that we are having a little difficulty machine raking some bunkers. I am getting a little weary of looking at the contaminated sand in some of them. Call it old fashioned if you wish, but I prefer a brighter look to the bunkers. The visuals are much greater when the sand is clean.

Apparently, the decreasing amounts of sand are causing some problems for some of our players, according to the survey.

The responses were sorted by age groups—less than 30 - 40, etc. Inter-

estingly enough, the dissatisfaction rose with age. If you assume some rough or approximate correlation between age and handicap, it all makes sense.

Now you understand the motivation for this issue's survey question. My conversations with colleagues about sand bunkers over the past few years have shown me I am not the only golf course superintendent struggling with pleasing his players over the bunker sand issue. The remedies being used merit an entire article of the GRASS ROOTS.

For now, a few questions and their answers will have to suffice. Here are those questions I put to a number of WGCSA members. Unfortunately, the

sample isn't as large as I would like. But I think it is sufficient enough to see some trends and initiate some more thinking about the problem.

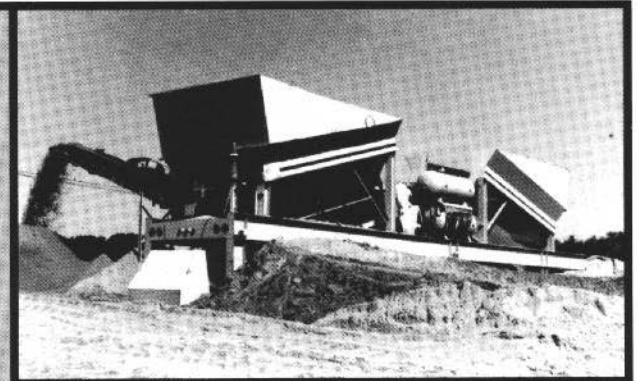
1. Do you know if your bunker sand conforms to USGA recommendations?  
YES: 6 NO: 12

2. Are your players generally satisfied with your sand bunkers?  
YES: 9 NO: 9

3. What is the source of most of your bunker problems?  
Sand Quality: 4  
Sand Consistency: 8  
Bunker Drainage: 6

4. Do you hand rake bunkers daily?—0  
for events?—2 or never?—16

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