



Questions From The Floor

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We've built a number of sand bunkers this year, and the members expect them to immediately offer the same conditions as existing bunkers.

In your experience, how long does it take for new sand in a bunker to reach normal or acceptable condition for play? (Dane County)

It is unlikely that new sand bunkers will play the same as the older models very soon unless they are given extraordinary care. Old sand is usually contaminated with silt and clay from eroding soil on the slopes or from excessively deep raking with motorized equipment. Contaminated sand usually requires frequent, rather deep raking to maintain playability.

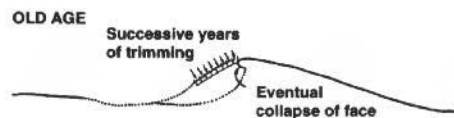
New sand doesn't have these cementing agents, so it must be settled, tamped or packed into place so that the entire profile is firm. That takes time—two or three months or over winter in most cases—if the sand is acceptable. The best in Wisconsin are washed mason's sand with particle sizes ranging from 0.25 to 1.00 mm (will pass through a # 18 sieve and be retained on a # 60 sieve), with a wide range of particle sizes in between. Angular or subangular particles are preferred since round grains are more resistant to compaction.

Note that particle size is similar to that of topdressing/construction sand, but particle shape and size distribution are different.

Speaking of bunkers, what is the depth of sand you recommend in bunkers? (Dane County)

For championship play the USGA recommends 2 to 3 inches on bunker faces and 4 to 6 inches on the floors. This may vary according to the slopes and length of the greenside faces, however. Steep slopes are easily eroded and washouts are the rule rather than exception. When sand is thrown back it must be re-packed to avoid imbedded ball problems, and shallow sand packs more easily.

Steep slopes are often the result of the aging process and may not come close to resembling the original architecture. They were made, not born, by erosion and edging for a period of



years. (Line drawing from Hawtree)

Now that the turf groomers have been in use for several years, what is your current thinking about their value in preparing a putting surface for daily play? Are they making a difference? How often should they be used on a green? Daily? Weekly? (Milwaukee County)

Groomers are used on many courses to slightly increase Stimpmeter readings (3 to 4 inches) without reducing the height of cut. This is similar to double-cutting because it reduces drag on the rolling ball. A few superintendents use groomers daily, but most prefer an every other day routine, running in straight lines only with no perimeter cut, to avoid excessive leaf removal. Operating depth is very important, to avoid peeling the greens, and that will vary depending on height of cut, softness/firmness of the surface, etc., as well as the population of speed freaks playing the course.

My sense is that some Wisconsin golf course superintendents are now rolling their greens on a regular basis. Am I right? How much does rolling increase green speed, and how long does the effect last? What is the best frequency and direction? Won't soil compaction be a problem? (Waukesha County)

Rolling is an old procedure, once used to avoid mowing on weekends (the light rollers were wider than the mowers and had no baskets to empty). Today, rolling is used periodically to temporarily increase green speed and surface firmness desired

for tournament play.

Increased putting speed depends on the weight of the roller, the height of cut and, perhaps, the number of passes over the greens. According to Jerry Kershasky, heavy rollers used at Westmoor increase Stimpmeter readings about 12 inches, with a half-life of one day. Lighter rollers have been built which replace the cutting units of Jacobsen triplexes. Toro triplexes have become light rollers by putting weights in the clipping baskets so that the large front roller applies more downward pressure. These have increased Stimp readings a bit, but I don't know how much.

I see no particular harm in rolling if the top couple of inches of the profile is sand. Round sand. Topdressing mixtures containing soil or high levels of highly decomposed peat are likely to become compacted, so they should not be rolled heavily. Some light rolling to smooth out surfaces roughened by heavy play may be OK, but compaction-related problems must be expected and corrected by spiking, hollow tine aeration, etc.

First we had plant materials for 150 yard markers. Then we went to flat granite markers at 150 yards. They were removed in favor of scores of yardage markers on top of sprinkler heads on either side of the fairway.

Now our players want 150 yard markers back. What would you recommend? (Green County)

Personally, I like the old USGA/ Joe Dey philosophy that depth of vision was as important to the golf play as strength, so no visual aids should be provided. Nevertheless, 150 yard markers sold a lot of bushes and some golfers must have favored automatic irrigation systems just to get the yardage numbers on the sprinklers (now up to three per head). I like Zontek's "Just Hit It" example.

Why not give people what they want? We have whiffle balls or flag-
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lets on flagsticks or special color flags to show where the hole is cut, front to back. Might as well start renting or selling lasers, since some high-end public operations sell books showing distance of every tree, bunker, stream, pond, outhouse and beer garden on the course. The days of the purists are over.

Is verticutting greens outmoded and behind the times? Is spiking of putting surfaces passe? (Monroe County)

Verticutting is far from outmoded. Along with brushing, it is the best procedure to minimize spike snags on closely mowed greens and helps keep grain under control. Groomers do not substitute because they do not cut as deep (or better not).

Once a week or twice before every (frequent) topdressing are the norms.

Spiking is also helpful, but isn't used as much now that sand topdressing is a common practice. Spiking does benefit those who interseed just before topdressing. It may also help develop better sod density by cutting stolons to generate new growth at the nodes. Spiking is also helpful in perforating shallow stratifications and when changing topdressing materials, in an effort to blur the sharp interface between materials into a "transition zone."

How are PGR's working in Wisconsin? Under what circumstances do you recommend their use? (La Crosse County)

PGR's are difficult to evaluate since results in the field have been inconsistent from course to course. They have discolored *Poa annua* but haven't eliminated it or reduced seed-

head production. They do, however, slow all growth and help retain putting speed through the day. This is important on courses with a great deal of late afternoon play. Application must be precise and frequency must be judged on performance.

They should be helpful in inter-seeding projects, to help the non-competitive bentgrass and bluegrass seedlings get started before being overgrown by *Poa annua*.

PGR's have also reduced the mowing frequency but any large-scale use deserves some cost accounting. Difficult-to-mow areas should be considered for potential use.

What is the best method you've seen for keeping grass trimmed around trees? We've gone the herbicide route and seen soil slough from the bases of larger trees. We've used mulch, but removed it for safety (concern for eyes) and rulings (free lift?). Gang mowers cause a lot of damage, and riding rotaries aren't a lot better. Two seasons' use of string trimmers show potential girdling damage to trees. We're back to Lawnboys and hand shears (and the resulting time commitment).

There has to be a better answer out there. What is it? (Sheboygan County)

See above, last sentence. There's no universal, "best method." Around greens and tees I'd rather remove those trees which are too close and require manicuring. We see all kinds of operations with none having a distinct advantage over others. Some old timers would use rotaries around trees, but only if the blades were very

dull. They felt that hammered grass blades regrew more slowly than cut blades. (Sorta like string trimmers do today.)

How serious was turf loss last winter, in Wisconsin and surrounding states? (Brown County)

Central Wisconsin was the epicenter of *Poa annua* and ryegrass winterkill, 1991-92. Greens, tees and fairway losses occurred from Green Bay to Madison. Fall plantings of bluegrass, ryegrass and bent were also lost at courses in southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois. The best prevention is to provide better conditions for the desired grasses during the growing season, by drainage improvements, shade reduction, tree root pruning and minimizing traffic-induced soil compaction by feet, golf cars and maintenance equipment.

How serious has the drought been for golf courses in your Region? (Grant County)

Dry weather has not been considered to be damaging—yet, because the prolonged cool weather has cushioned the stress on plants. The availability of water is "under study" in some areas, but negative actions by bureaucrats have not been destructive—yet. The roughs in several courses have cut seedstalks still visible in July, indicating that little growth has occurred, but as long as the irrigation systems function, the primary playing areas are OK. This would be a good time to point out the deficiencies in irrigation systems, especially the scallops along edges of fairways, the wilted donuts around sprinklers and/or the overwatering in mid-fairways caused by trying to get water to the edges.

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