



USGA GREENS

By Monroe S. Miller

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It seems like every new golf course these days is laying claim to USGA greens. Most of those making these claims aren't the golf course superintendents at the facilities involved. Usually those who are telling the whole world about their USGA Green Section greens likely don't have a clue to what Green Section specifications really are. Also guilty are some (emphasis on **SOME**) architects, builders, blenders and sand suppliers.

I can't forgive anyone for diminishing the meaning of a true USGA Green Section specification putting green. Developers, ad agencies, real estate people, et. al. often boast out of ignorance. The rest of those I mentioned, however, cannot be forgiven; they know better. Or should.

Take this quiz to see if you are well informed about Green Section specs. If golf course superintendents aren't precise about these specs, no one will be.

1. A new golf course advertises in a popular golf journal that it has modified USGA greens. Is there such a thing?

2. You are visiting with a golf course architect about a new golf course he's designed and that is nearly built. You ask him if he built USGA greens and he replied "absolutely". Since you are curious about how the coarse sand layer was spread and how much it cost for 20 greens, you press for details. The architect says "we left out the coarse sand layer." You reply that he, therefore, doesn't have a golf course with USGA greens. The architect is indignant.

Who is right—you or the architect?

3. You've had your golf course architect design a new golf green as part of your course's master plan implementation. Final plans are in hand, a contractor is scheduled and material is starting to arrive in your shop yard.

A triaxle rolls in with a load of sand, and you meet the driver with a nest of bronze screens. You tell him, "don't unload until I've screened a composite sample. If it doesn't meet the USGA specs, you'll have to haul this back to the sand supplier." Among other things, the driver says, "you are crazy."

Are you?

4. You send two 80/20 blends to a soil testing laboratory on a USGA approved list and ask them to recommend the better of the two blends. All field construction done at this point is to USGA specs. You therefore can rightfully claim USGA greens once the lab tells you which blend is best and the greens are built from that material, right?

5. You send several sand samples and a number of organic amendments to a soils testing lab you have faith in and that has USGA approval. Your instructions are for the lab to develop an 80/20 blend that meets USGA physical specifications. The lab gets back to you that the best they

can do is a mix with a perc test of 3.45" water per hour, and suggest that it's "close enough".

Is it?

6. During a preconstruction meeting the contractor tells you of his plan to rototill sand and peat on-site. The architect doesn't seem to object?

Should you?

7. The new golf course you've been hired to manage is a beehive of activity, and you cannot be in a dozen places at once. So you find yourself watching everything from glue joints to putting green construction. You pull up to a new green that laborers are finishing raking for seed. You carefully cut, randomly, several places and measure the depth of the topmix. It is only nine to ten inches thick, so you stop that operation and get the construction superintendent over immediately. You point out the shortage of material and he tries to convince you that 10 uncompacted inches is sufficient.

Should you cave in to his argument?

8. The coarse is under construction on a very nice piece of property that is particularly well drained. The owner wants to leave out the tile in the greens, claiming it would be a waste of money.

Can he do that?

9. What are the grassing requirements for a USGA Green Section green?

10. Are USGA Green Section specification greens guaranteed? 🌿

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the personnel to go with it. And you certainly have the energy, motivation, drive and enthusiasm with Drs. Kussow, Rossi, Koval and Meyer. It's so wonderful to see that."

He added that one advantage to the Noer Facility is that it is seven miles from campus while his research center is 180 miles from campus. "But we're very uniquely located in Dallas," he continues. "The horticulture growing maps show that we can be too hot, too cold, too wet and too dry. That exposes plant materials to the worst conditions that they can have."

"As a native of Wisconsin, what do you like/dislike about Texas? What do you miss about Wisconsin?" I wonder.

"I always make it a point not to be in Dallas in the summer," he quickly answers. "And I always make it a point not to be in Wisconsin in the winter. I do a lot of my research in Oregon where most of the bentgrass seed production is done. And so when the summer temperatures get pretty high, I find my way out to Oregon."

"But I miss the season changes," he continues. "The rolling hills and the trees. I love Wisconsin. It's a great state. I love coming back for visits." With his mother in Platteville and his 21-year-old daughter at college in LaCrosse, he usually gets back to Wisconsin every other year.

Milt was born and raised in Grant County, Wis.—Platteville and Belmont. "I essentially grew up as a city boy. But, since I was about 11 years old, I spent my summers on the farms with my grandparents and my uncles," he remembers.

Upon graduating from high school, he attended the UW-Platteville where he received a B.S. in agriculture in 1968. One professor there, Dr. Roger Higgs, greatly influenced his future plans. "I did not want to go out into the sales world in agribusiness," Milt explains. "Because of Dr. Higgs'

teaching and the way he handled things, I felt that I really wanted to be involved in teaching and research. That was my primary driving force for going on to graduate school."

Graduate school was put on hold for two years while Milt served Uncle Sam at Fort Bliss, Texas. Then he entered the UW-Madison where he received his M.S. in agronomy in 1972 and his Ph.D. in plant breeding and plant genetics in 1974 under Dr. Richard R. Smith. He did some post-doctorate work at Oregon State University. Then he was hired by the USDA Agricultural Research Station in Temple, Tex.

"In 1979 the call came to go to work for North American Plant Breeders," Milt recalls. It was his first work with turf and his first work with a private company. "I reinstated a turf/forage grass breeding program that had been dormant for about 10 years."

"I stayed in that position until July of 1980 when the BIG call came," he continues. "That was to come back to Texas and join the Texas A&M faculty as an associate professor located at the Dallas Research and Extension Center."

"Research and work aside, what other interests do you have?" I inquire.

"I love world travel," he answers. "I've been in China, through most of the Pacific Rim countries a number of times, and in Europe. Most of these trips have been related to my work. As a plant geneticist, I travel around the world collecting new plant materials as well as visiting golf courses and sports facilities."

"I have become interested in photography again, especially macro photography," he adds. "It's work related, but it's fun. I'm working on a book on identifying plant materials using vegetative keys, and I will do a lot of photography for that."

"And I love the outdoors," he adds.

"Recently my wife and I purchased a new home and we will be creating some ornamental gardens, working with ornamental grasses as well as flowers—a perennial landscaping system is what we want."

"I hesitate to call it golf, but I do swing at that little white thing," he jokes. "I'm not a very good golfer because I don't concentrate on the game. I spend more time enjoying the environment, enjoying nature."

"How are you handling a two-state marriage?" I ask, knowing that his new wife works in Oregon.

"Our argument is, she works for a company that is home officed in New Jersey. Her research center is in Oregon. So it makes sense that her home ought to be in Texas," Milt explains. "Our primary residence will be in Texas and we'll have a secondary residence in Oregon."

"Anything else you'd like to say to the superintendents in Wisconsin?" I inquire.

"Go Big Red!"

"Did you see the Rose Bowl game?" I proudly ask.

"I was involved with the renovation of the Cotton Bowl here in Texas, to go from artificial turf back to natural turf," he explains. "Notre Dame and Texas A&M were playing in the Cotton Bowl that same day. And their tee-off time—catch that, their kick-off time—was about 10 minutes after the kickoff time for the Rose Bowl."

"I was in Wisconsin with my family, my brothers and sisters and everybody else, and knew that these games were at the same time," he continues. "So I gained control of the remote control. I kept switching back and forth because I wanted to see both games. We missed only one play of both games."

"So I did get to see the Rose Bowl while I was back in Wisconsin. It was great to be home," he concludes. 🏏

ANSWERS TO THE WISCONSIN GOLF COURSE QUIZ ON PAGE 26)

1. No, of course not.
2. You are, obviously. The architect needs to reread the specs for USGA greens.
3. No, you are merely "responsible". If the sand doesn't meet the USGA size specs, you won't have USGA greens. The driver needs to understand his frustration properly should be vented with the sand supplier, not you, if the load doesn't meet specs.
4. Wrong. The lab answered your question, but your question should have been, "do either of these samples meet USGA Green Section specs for putting green construction?" If the "better" of the two samples doesn't meet specs, you **DON'T** have USGA greens. Period.
5. No. Go back to square one, find new samples and resubmit them to the lab.
6. Of course. Greens built to USGA specs are built of root zone material mixed OFF-SITE.
7. No way, not if you want a USGA green for that hole. The specs say "there must be an absolute minimum of 12" of uncompacted top mix spread over the green." The contractor owes you at least two more inches of rootzone blend.
8. Of course he can; it's his property and his golf course. But he won't have USGA greens.
9. There aren't any.
10. No.