



Questions From The Floor

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Q: I'm getting underway at a new golf course and I need to establish a lot of baseline information. What method(s) would you recommend for determining the area of irregular shapes like golf greens?—FOND DU LAC COUNTY

A: You could go hi-tech with aerial photographs, geographic positioning, etc., but I prefer a long-standing technique that can be used in-house with nothing more than a piece of plywood and a tape measure. Start with a good tape. Nylon tapes stretch and become inaccurate over time. For under \$100 you can get a 100-foot plastic-coated steel tape. I prefer one marked in feet and tenths of an inch rather than feet and inches it's easier to work with.

Start by drilling a small hole in the center of about a 3 ft x 3 ft piece of plywood. Using a protractor, carefully draw lines out from the hole every 10 degrees. You should end up with 36 lines. Place the plywood in the approximate center of the green and secure it in place with a large spike pushed through the hole in the middle, leaving enough of the spike extending out so that the end of the tape can be placed over the spike. It is at this point that some forethought can be very helpful in the future. As we all know, golf greens have a nasty habit of shrinking over time. If you place the plywood in a position to which you can accurately return to some years later and you keep a record of that position and all your measurements, you can accurately determine the original boundaries of the greens. To locate a point to which you can return at a later date, I suggest use of irrigation heads as reference points. Pick out two heads on approximately opposite sides of the green. Run the tape between them and record the distance between them. Center the plywood over the mid-point between the sprinkler heads. Clearly, there is information here that needs to go into a permanent record. Which irrigation heads? The distance between them?

The next step is for two people to measure the 36 distances from the spike to the edge of the green. It takes two because one must properly position the tape along each line drawn on the plywood. Once all the numbers are recorded, the area of the green is calculated. Sum all of the distances and divide by 36 to get the average radius of the green. The area = (average radius)²(3.14). In other words, multiply the average radius by itself and that number by 3.14. The answer is the area in square feet.

Q: It appears the green committee at our club is going to insist that I begin rolling greens-keeping up with the Jones and all that. I'm worried about compaction; has experience with this procedure shown that I have nothing to worry about?—MILWAUKEE COUNTY

A: There is no pat answer to this question. It depends on the type of root zone mix, how wet you keep the greens, what you're mowing with, and so on. The real issue seems to be what the committee understands to be the virtues of rolling and how often they expect you to roll the greens. Rolling will increase green speed by 8 inches or so for 2 to 4 hours, depending on the status of the turf and weather. The problem one encounters with rolling is generally not that of compaction per se, but wear and tear on the turfgrass. Research has shown that thinning may occur if you roll more than 3 times a week. With this thinning comes algae and all sorts of ancillary problems. Thus, if you must roll, have the committee decide what the key times are (e.g., men's day, weekends) and only roll at those times.

Is rolling here to stay? I've talked with some superintendents in those parts of the country where rolling first became the thing to do. What I've heard is that more and more rollers are being relegated to the rear of the storage building.

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