

1998 Wisconsin Golf Turf Symposium - "What You Seed Is What You Get"

By Monroe S. Miller

The 1998 Symposium was the second of a three part series on putting greens - construction, grow-in, and management. Like last year's meeting, it was excellent.

A worthwhile educational session always has great speakers and we really had them last November. Dr. John Stier accepted keynote speaker responsibilities and handled them superbly, as well as anyone ever has (and that includes some powerful company from past meetings). John touched on his views of successful putting green establishment and covered the material from site selection through early mowings. "In the end," John remarked, "there is as much art as science involved in establishment. In fact, the science specific to establishment is scarce, and grow-in rates soon converge despite disparate inputs."

Bob Shearman returned to Wisconsin to again assume the podium at the Symposium. The University of Nebraska professor talked about bentgrass cultivar selection and seed testing. His experience with NTEP trials came through in his lecture and the advice he gave.

Thank goodness for Jim Moore. And thank goodness Jim Moore is willing to travel to Wisconsin as frequently as he has to address the Symposium. His USGA responsibilities and his vast experience were evident as he covered the phases of putting green grow-in. I was especially pleased to have Jim credit golf course superintendent skills as key to a successful grow-in.

Rick Elyea discussed seeding rates, techniques and timing. As an employee of Tee-2-Green, he had an excellent perspective on the subject matters and had a lot of advice to offer.

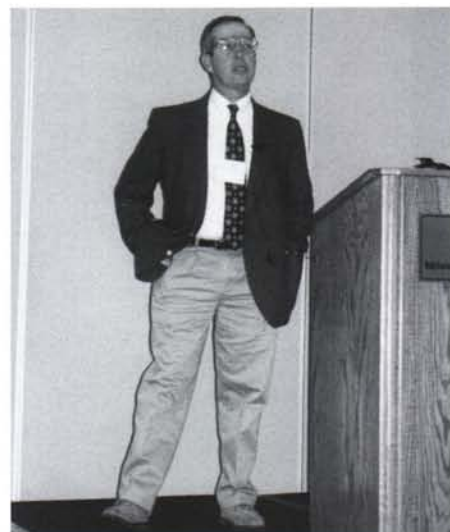


Dr. John Stier handled the keynote address as well as anyone in memory.

It is not often you'll get to hear from a guy who has experienced 50 - 60 individual grow-ins, but we had that chance when Terry Buchen gave his remarks. Highlights from Terry's field experience for me included:

- grow-in greens as fast as possible,
- eliminate erosion opportunities,
- first three weeks after seeding are critical,
- pesticide use at reduced intervals will be required,
- NEVER sod a green,
- seed a green in two directions and dimple it in,
- check root zone mix every 500 - 1000 tons before it arrives at the site, and
- use tracer wire at green perimeter and at tile lines.

Buchen was followed by a panel discussion among experienced grow-in superintendents - veteran Oscar Miles, Marc Davison and Gordy Waddington. They were joined by Bob Vavrek and took questions from the audience. They concluded a very interesting first day.



Dr. Bob Shearman, visiting from the University of Nebraska, spoke twice on the program.

Bob Shearman led the second day of lectures, this time exploring pre-plant soil testing and fertility programs during the grow-in period. He was followed at the podium by Louie Miller, a golf course superintendent who has also previously spoken at our Symposium. Louis, superintendent at Louisville (KY) Country Club, also is a partner in a golf course construction firm and has build around 150 putting greens. He shared his experiences with the audience, especially the issue of opening a new green for play.

As the tradition continued, Bob Vavrek summarized the Symposium, made some observations of his own, and did both with exceptional skill. He gave himself a tough act to follow next year.

The event is always really wonderful, but a few others things added to the experience this year. Specifically,

1. I appreciated Tony Rzadzki's prayer, offered at the start of the



Mike Bavier presented Mike Lee with recognition from GCSAA for outstanding work at the U.S. Women's Open last summer.

afternoon session. It was refreshing and sincere.

2. I buttonholed Bob Shearman to get a report on the new CALS dean, Dr. Elton Aberle. Abe and Bob were colleagues at Nebraska and both were department chairs. Bob

knew him well and gave him a 100% positive review. "Abe was a great choice for Wisconsin."

3. Mike Lee was recognized by GCSAA for his outstanding work at Blackwolf Run for the US Women's Open last summer. The recognition

was given by Mike Bavier of Chicago; Mike is a GCSAA past president (and a new book author).

4. Al Nees is back with Milorganite.

5. The second day attendance was one of the largest in memory. Some years the return crowd is so small it is embarrassing. Not this year.

6. We need a good luncheon speaker. We have gone without any speaker for a few years now, and I for one would love to see a return to that feature.

All in all, the 1998 Symposium was a beneficial meeting that was well planned by the Symposium Committee. We will all be back this fall. ♣

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