



The Use of Perennial Ryegrass on Golf Tees

By John Hopko, Turfgrass Specialist
Northrup King Company

We all agree that the teeing areas on golf courses are most times subjected to a great deal of punishment throughout the golfing season. The tee is the starting point as well as the resting point for each golfer who plays the course. These areas, which are many times too small, are exposed to heavy traffic. Compaction, shade, thatch development around the outer edges and general wear on the turf are just a few of the superintendents' problems.

Somewhere along the line of a superintendent's career, he is usually faced with one of three alternatives: 1) Upgrading the existing turf by overseeding; 2) Renovation or reconstruction of an old tee; 3) Totally new construction of a teeing area.

After deciding which approach will be taken and the stamp of approval has been placed on it by the Greens Committee and/or Board, the superintendent is faced with many decisions. A major decision is which turfgrass will he use? It is at this point I offer a candidate for consideration: the fine leafed perennial ryegrasses.

Over the past twenty years the improvements made on the perennial ryegrasses have been numerous and dramatic. Many of these improvements, such as finer textured leaves, improved mowing quality, winter hardiness with certain varieties and a deeper green color, make this species an attractive choice today as opposed to twenty years ago.

The following qualities of the perennial ryegrasses make them attractive to a golf tee situation: 1) They tolerate traffic better than any other species; 2) They have a deep root system which enables ryegrass to withstand drought or dry conditions better, This means watering less and being able to keep the tee more firm which is favorable to the golfer. The tee also is damaged less from wear and tear. 3) The roots will penetrate compacted soils better than other species; 4) Ryegrasses have excellent disease resistance which also saves money on fungicides as well as the labor to apply them; 5) They develop very little thatch, if any; 6) Germinate rapidly and establish quickly. Germination can occur within three to ten days; 7) The mowing qualities are clean and the leaf texture is fine, making it an excellent companion when seeded with the improved bluegrasses; 8) Will tolerate mowing heights of 1/2" with proper management practices; 9) Delray, NK200 and Goalie are three varieties on the market today which offer excellent winter hardiness; 10) The fact that you can't buy ryegrass sod or sod with ryegrass in it makes it necessary to seed. Seeding has definite agronomic benefits, not to mention substantial economic benefits.

Speaking from experience as a golf course superintendent, a mixture of 50% perennial ryegrass and 50% elite Kentucky bluegrasses seeded on two newly constructed tees gave me an exceptional stand of tough, durable and attractive turf. If the teeing area is exceptionally small and suffers from extreme traffic, you may want to consider increasing the percentage of ryegrass. On an established tee that you are overseeding, a 100% perennial ryegrass overseeding may be appropriate where you are trying to incorporate the benefits of the ryegrass into the existing turf.

Timing, of course, is very important in any seeding or overseeding operation. The best time would be a late summer or an early fall seeding. My second choice would be an early spring seeding and my third choice would be a dormant seeding in the late fall.

(continued on Page 13)

(continued from Page 9)

This can be especially effective when overseeding ryegrass into existing turf to repair thin or damaged areas from the previous golfing season.

In closing I would like to say that I am not recommending the use of perennial ryegrass for every tee on every golf course. I am offering you a species of grass to consider in your decision making process the next time you are faced with such a situation. The ryegrasses, as stated in this article, have a number of positive qualities which may make life easier for you as a turf manager.

FRINGE BENEFITS ADVANTAGES

Fringe benefits are an important part of employee compensation, but in the last few years they have come to be taken for granted. Most employees assume that they work for their weekly or monthly take-home pay and that fringe benefits, such as health, accident and hospitalization insurance, are thrown in as an afterthought.

In today's highly competitive labor market, a good fringe benefit package is an excellent way for an employer to attract and retain key personnel. These benefits are an important part of an employee's compensation and employers should make sure their workers know exactly what their fringe benefits are worth to both parties.

Fringe benefits carry a double advantage. They increase an employee's real income because he does not have to pay taxes on them. And the employer's net cost is less than the boost in salary that would be required to cover them. This is almost always the case when benefits are tax deductible and may be true even in the absence of deductions.

For example, consider these figures quoted in the Wholesale Nursery Growers of America newsletter. If an employee in the 38 percent tax bracket is given benefits worth \$500, he would have to receive a before taxes salary increase of \$715 to have \$500 remaining to purchase these services. If his employer is in the 48 percent tax bracket, it would cost him \$372 to provide such a salary increase, but only \$260 for the fringe benefits.

Unfortunately, many employees do not appreciate this added income because they have never been told exactly what it is worth to them. Seldom do people in the job market consider the relative merits of each prospective employer's fringe benefit package.

When you conduct job interviews, make sure the prospective employee knows that you offer an attractive benefits package and be sure to explain it to him in detail soon after he is hired. Some employers use a form which brings together all actual earnings and benefits so their employees can see exactly how much they are being paid.

WHY ACCIDENTS HAPPEN

Accidents are generally thought to be a result of bad luck or an act of God. However, an unsafe act, a hazardous condition or some combination of the two must occur before an accident can happen. Of these two conditions, unsafe acts or work practices are a contributing factor in 90 percent of all accidents. Here are some of the factors which can cause workers to commit errors leading to accidents: LACK OF PROPER TRAINING can be a major cause of accidents. IGNORANCE OF A HAZARDOUS CONDITION can result from lack of experience or poor communications. INDIFFERENCE OR LAZINESS resulting from fatigue, a poor relationship with the boss or a lack of motivation can make an employee take an unsafe short cut. BAD EXAMPLES set by other workers can be imitated by less experienced employees. UNDUE HASTE caused by supervisory pressure, an overloaded schedule or a desire to complete an unpleasant task quickly can make workers bypass important safety steps or processes. Reprint FORE FRONT