

# THE BLUE AND THE GRAY

by JAMES R. ANDERSON  
SUPERINTENDENT WICHITA FALLS C.C.  
WICHITA FALLS, TEXAS

After spending two years down here in north Texas (pronounced Norttexas, one word), I thought I would tell ya'll about the joy of growing turf in the south.

First I should tell you a little about my club. Wichita Falls Country Club was built before my dad was born and constructed using the finest "gumbo" (right center, soil textural classes triangle) available. The term "internal drainage" had not yet reached this area and external drainage would be taken care of by the Texas wind. The greens were seeded/sprigged in the finest combination of 328 and 419 Tif, Congressional, Washington, and Seaside bentgrass, and a fair amount of Poa annua. Throughout the years the greens were managed in such a way as to not allow one single variety to dominate, although the Poa annua was making a strong bid. The tees, collars, and fairways consist of common bermuda with a fair amount of weeds. The weed control program in the past was an application of ammonium nitrate or ammonium sulfate in mid-June, no water, and burning the weeds out. Cost wise it was cheaper than herbicides but aesthetically it didn't really work out.

My first inclination was a good old fashioned "Caddyshack" blowup and blame it on gopher eradication, but the golfing membership wouldn't even think of playing on temporary greens longer than a day. We decided to go the USGA route, 5/8" tines, loads of sand, overseeding with Penncross spring and fall, chop the N and water down, and a bunch of slit trenches. This program seems to be working but we are years from being where I want us to be. Maybe my new greens committee chairman will get into the gopher eradication program.

Wichita Falls is something of an oddity in itself. We generally have the record high and record low in the state of Texas. The spring of '82 we had

back-to-back 100 year rains and 80% of my golf course was under 3 foot of water. This year we have managed only .4" since mid-May. The only climatic condition you can rely on here is that it is gonna be hot. This summer we would have set the record for most consecutive days above 100 degrees but a cool front moved in the first part of August and for two days straight the temp could only manage to get up to 97 degrees. This coupled with the wind that always blows from the southwest tends to put the bentgrass in a weakened state to say the least.

Chemically there isn't much we could do and with the inconsistency of the soil under our greens, automatic syringing was out of the question. The only answer was to change our cultural practices. We started by raising the height of cut from 5/32 to 1/4 and decreasing our mowing schedule to just Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday. Starting at 10:00 each morning, 3 men were sent out to hand syringe any "hot spots" that may develop. Even with the syringing, the long, dry summer resulted in some "thinning" but no areas of complete die out.

With heat such a problem and temporary greens out of the question, we decided to replace our antiquated irrigation system. We knew that the new system would cost approximately 1/4 million and we didn't have that kind of money lying around. We also knew we would have a mutiny on our hands if we tried to assess the membership because they had been assessed \$1,000 the year before for clubhouse renovation. Finally we came up with the idea of selling bonds. We set it up at staggered payback periods with a competitive interest rate. We obtained the money to pay back these notes by taking a small amount out of every members monthly dues. The bonds sold quickly because the membership knew they were helping out the course plus getting a financial payback for their money, not just an assessment payout. That winter we installed a new irrigation system and pump station which, in Texas, is a necessity.

Something that I had never even thought about in Minnesota but experienced here are Nematodes. After the flood of '82 we

continued on Page 6

started experiencing our turf becoming stunted, chlorotic and generally thinning out. It acted like Curvularia, but every chemical treatment I tried failed to bring about results. Finally one of the chemical sales reps suggested we try a Nematode count. There was a yellowish line on the outer perimeter of the dead areas and we took our sample from that area and outward approximately 6". These samples were sent in and the results came back positive. I had such a good crop of Nematodes that if there was a market for the little fellas and we could harvest them, the club would have made enough money to rebuild all the greens. Needless to say we started a program to rid us of these guys and because you can't get rid of them all without gassing, we applied Nemacur twice a year, late spring when soil temp was greater than 55 degrees, and in early fall before the temps drop off. We didn't have much problem this year but I just sent another sample in to get a population level and most likely will continue to retreat as long as I'm here.

Weeds seem to flourish quite nicely down here. In the bermuda grass they are not much of a problem with all the chemicals

available. We have both a pre- and post-emergence program to kill the dallisgrass, crabgrass, and goosegrass. Pre-emergence treatment of benefin and oxadiazon seem to work well, but with the long growing season we still have the spray rig on the back of the Cushman all summer long spraying metribuzin mixed with MSMA. One nice thing about Texas is the fact that when the bermuda grass goes dormant, we can go out and spray our tees, fairways, and around the greens with glyphosate at 1 qt./A and knock out the winter weeds (POA mostly) without harming the bermuda. One thing that isn't so nice is the weed problem on the greens. Bensulide is the safest pre-emergence herbicide but does little in the control of goosegrass. Also the bermuda encroachment into the greens can become quite severe during the summer. Goosegrass control is simple--hand weed it out. The three men who syringe greens spend the morning, (7-10) going around pulling out any goosegrass they find. The encroachment problem is handled by edging the green every Monday and spraying a strip of siduron on the green side of the edge. This helps with the

continued on Page 7

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Hybrid varieties but the common bermuda must be hand weeded out. These practices are time consuming and expensive, but left unchecked, can just about overtake a green in one summer.

All in all, I would have to say moving to Texas has been an experience. Professionally speaking, I've learned and had to learn more in dealing with different grasses, different climatic conditions, and growing bentgrass twelve months of the year. Personally, I've learned to shift down a gear. The attitude of the people here seems to be more of an easy-going, "good-ol'-boy" type of thing. I really miss the four seasons versus the two we have down here. I guess the thing I miss the most is when all your equipment is ready for next year, there is 3 foot of snow on the ground, and you know spring isn't for another two months. If any of ya'll are ever down in Texas feel free to stop in..would like to see some Yankees any chance I can.

## BOB HOPE TO RECEIVE OLD TOM MORRIS AWARD

Bob Hope has been selected to receive the Old Tom Morris Award from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. The award is one of the most exclusive major honors in the world of golf. Selection of award winners is made on an unscheduled periodic basis, and Hope will be only the second recipient. The first was Arnold Palmer.

Hope is scheduled to receive the award during GCSAA's 55th International Turfgrass Conference and Show to be held in Las Vegas, Nev., Jan. 29-Feb. 4, 1984. The presentation will be made at GCSAA's annual banquet the evening of Feb. 3 at the MGM Grand Hotel.

'Old Tom' Morris--the first 'superstar' of golf--was a greenkeeper, golf professional, club and ball maker, golf course architect and accomplished player who won four British Open Championships between 1861 and 1867."

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