



# HOLE NOTES

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## WINTER DISEASE AND PREPARATION ISSUE

# Christmas in August: *Covering Up During Winter's Extremes*

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As you talk with golf course superintendents about winter protection for greens, you soon realize that there are as many opinions as there are options for covering greens. Historically, covers have included polyethylene sheeting, saran shade cloth, topdressing, branches or snow fence to accumulate snow, straw, organic compost and mulches, wood fiber mats, geotextile fabrics, and more recently, water impermeable covers.

The type of cover to use, or whether or not one should be used, can be a hotly debated topic among fellow superintendents, as well as with players, members, greens committees, and owners. It's a debate that the majority of the time has little significance. However, after a winter such as the 2002-2003 it can become a major point of contention.

Because the weather is unpredictable, the correct course of action is also difficult to predict. We have seen the stitched seam between two geotextile panels produce the most outstanding turf one year and cause the greatest damage the next. We have seen covers that protect annual bluegrass one year and cause complete desiccation the next. The choice that is made for each course has to depend upon the factors that are unique to each situation and the approach taken may vary for each individual green.

Many factors need to be considered when deciding how to best



An example of all treatments at Rolling Green CC on the day that the covers were removed, March 26, 2003.

protect a green from potential winter injury. The most important factor is to determine the most likely cause of winter injury to each green or set of greens. Covers can play an integral part in the winter management of golf greens through the prevention of desiccation, protection from low temperature injury, prevention of ice cover, and to provide earlier spring green-up.

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