

Avoid the Temptation of Sand Topdressing

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Many golf course superintendents are observing with great interest the experimental practice of frequent sand topdressing of golf greens. The cheaper cost of straight sand topdressing is certainly tempting when compared with some of our more commonly used topdressing materials. The choice of a topdressing mixture is no less important to the quality of a putting green than the choice of soil mixtures for new green construction. Bad decisions in either instance can lead to golf greens which are costly to manage at best or impossible to keep alive in the summer, at worst. The most expensively constructed greens, utilizing mixes specified by laboratory tests can be ruined by the improper choice of topdressing material.

Topdressing of bentgrass greens has as its primary function the "truing" of greens by stabilizing the puffy thatch layer that normally develops in a bentgrass turf. It has come to be realized that topdressing also encourages stolon rooting aids, in thatch decomposition, stimulates new shoot growth, provides microorganisms antagonistic to parasitic fungi and provides nutrients to the turf. In winter overseeding of bermuda it serves to improve seed-soil contact and enhance germination. In vegetative establishment with stolons or sprigs, it aids in rooting. In northern climates topdressing is utilized to protect against winter desiccation. In situations where the existing greens soil is inadequate, frequent, heavy topdressing is utilized to actually "rebuild" or modify the existing golf green soil.

John Madison and William B. Davis of the University of California have conducted topdressing research utilizing sand materials common to the west coast and produced desirable results. The University of California guidelines suggest utilizing sand particles between 0.25 and 1.0 mm in diameter and using 1/9 cubic yard of topdressing per 1000 sq. ft. of green (about 1/30" thick) at each topdressing.¹ Topdressing frequency is dependent upon the growth rate of the bentgrass, but for calculation purposes, three week intervals between topdressings appear to be normal in their region.

Pesticides, nutrients and bentgrass seed are added to the topdressing as pressures dictate. The system is apparently working well under California's environmental conditions.

There are several areas of concern that come to mind when one contemplates a change in topdressing mixtures from the traditional sand-soil-peat or weblite-soil-peat to straight sand. Some of the more obvious questions arise from our current observation of sand-peat greens and from what we know to be the characteristics of sand as a growing medium. We must assume that the end result of long term use of the light, frequent sand topdressing is a bentgrass green growing in a layer of sand. Straight sand or sand-peat mixtures have been noted to exhibit the following characteristics:

- 1) excessive water infiltration
- 2) excessive nutrient leaching
- 3) lower microbial activity
- 4) hydrophobic drying
- 5) lack of moisture reservoir
- 6) susceptibility to layering

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National Tournament Team Results

The qualifying for our team that we will send to the National Tournament has been going on now for three months. The scores for qualifying were shot at Loudon Golf and Country, Indian Springs and Hunt Valley. The best two gross scores were used and the two best scores will be our team. If the top four players are unable to attend, the alternates will be sent in their place. The results are as follows:

1st	Paul O'Leary	76-75 - 151
2nd	Jack Montecaluo	75-82 - 157
3rd	Ken Braun	79-82 - 161
4th	David Kroll	81-81 - 162
5th	Bill Emerson	76-86 - 162
6th	Bob Orazi	83-79 - 162
7th	Ron Hall	78-85 - 163

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