

## Mid-Atlantic Association of Golf Course Superintendents NEWSLETTER

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### More Views On Those Championship Greens

by Douglas T. Hawes

There are a few points I would like to elaborate on in connection with any discussion of championship greens. Two pounds of nitrogen per year per thousand square feet seems to be adequate for that part of the country north of a line drawn from Denver through Omaha to New York City. The four-pound line appears to be down to Tulsa, while six pounds is for those poor superintendents trying to grow creeping bentgrass at the southern limits.

Potassium is definitely a key element, with using as much or more potassium than nitrogen a very important aspect. Get soil test levels in high range and keep them there. What are high potassium levels? Some soil test results are stated for potassium, calcium, magnesium, and sodium as percent of the cation (or base) exchange capacity. When looking at soil tests expressed in that manner, I call anything from 4% to 7% high.

I have seen greens with soil test results ranging from 0.1 to 10% of the base exchange capacity as potassium. I have come to the conclusion that until you get 3%, you do not have sufficient potassium to maintain good, healthy bentgrass greens. Those having high sodium levels need to keep the combined potassium and sodium percentage below 15%.

Dr. Richard Schmidt of Virginia

## From the Golf World . . . . . The Masters

The Augusta National Golf Club has become a totally different golf course, Jack Nicklaus told the golf writers assembled in front of him in a final interview on the Wednesday before the tournament started. It's not the course he won five Masters on, and the reason is that it is constantly being changed, he said. For example, five of Augusta's greens have been completely rebuilt to USGA specifications. They are much firmer, and when a shot comes in to them, it will bounce forward. The other 13 greens are softer; they hold too much water, and when the ball hits, it bounces back. Nicklaus believes that Augusta will continue to re-do its greens, and he wonders why they just don't do them all one summer, when the course is, as usual, closed. He has heard that the money to do that is a problem, which seems improbable.

One thing that Nicklaus, Watson, and a number of other players were negative about was the job done on Augusta's bunkers. To keep the sand from mixing with the red clay underneath (a familiar problem), they were cleaned out and plastic liners installed. However, many of the bunkers have steep faces, and the sand kept sliding down, exposing the plastic. To keep the sand up, it was being constantly raked, which contributed to its fluffiness as well as a tendency for the ball to bury, in some cases out of sight. The pros don't believe that the liner is a good idea.

Following instructions to the letter, the superintendent and his staff had Augusta in immaculate shape and the greens in glass-like condition. Nicklaus felt that they were in the 12' to 13' speed range on the Stimp meter, although he said that the real problem was not the speed but the slope; he joked that on some of the greens the Stimp readings would be 48' in one direction, 3' in the other. The tournament committee apparently agreed with Watson, Nicklaus, and Crenshaw on the speed of the greens; they slowed them down a little for the four days of the tournament.

Sam Torrance is a Scots pro, who was playing his first Masters. His father, who has been a professional as well as "greenskeeper" in Scotland, came over with him for the tournament. He said that in walking the course for six days with his son, he had yet to find a weed of any description. Needless to say, he was impressed.

The most unpopular green on the course was the one at No. 13, re-done two years ago by Nicklaus' golf course design and construction team. The major change in configuration was a shallow valley around three sides of the new green, almost a little continuous grass bunker, where before there had just been level collar. The effect has been to put a premium on not going over that green. When the pin was in the back, the approach shot from that little valley became a real problem — land the wedge shot on the green, it rolled past the pin and down to the lower terrace; hit the fringe, and the ball would stop. As a result, a lot of players thought twice about going for that par-5 in two; if they fall short, they're in the creek in front, if they hit the firm green and roll on over, they're in that deadly little valley, short of the bunker. Don't forget that No. 13 was the hole that probably cost Curtis Strange the Masters title.

### GCSAA Will Cover Tourney Preparation

In 1985, the GCSAA plans to provide information concerning course preparation by the golf course superintendents at the site of the LPGA Championship, the U.S. Open, and the PGA Championship as well as other events. The objective is to provide information on the course and the tournament preparations to the sports news media that are covering the tournament, providing them with a different angle on the course. New GCSAA president Eugene Baston commented: "The golf course superintendent does a tremendous

claims high potassium levels encourage *poa annua*. At medium to high nitrogen levels, I'm sure it is a factor; they also encourage clover.

job in preparing the course for tournament play, as he knows his job can affect the outcome of the tournament. The superintendent many times is not recognized for his major role in golf and in tournament play, and through our efforts, we hope he will achieve more recognition through the articles by golf writers." Bill Shelton, GCSAA Media Relations Manager will cover the major tournaments this year and provide current information each day on course preparation and conditions.

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