



TURFGRASS MATTERS

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USGA '95 – Year in Review

By Jim Moore



When USGA Green Section agronomists gathered for our fall staff meeting, all agreed 1995 was one of the most difficult in many years, particularly when it came to bringing greens through the summer.

We learned much from the difficulties Nature threw our way so we should be better prepared for the next tough summer. As German philosopher G.C. Lichtenberg stated: "It is in the gift for employing all the vicissitudes of life to one's own advantage and to that of one's craft that a large part of genius consists." In other words, there are lessons to be learned from the difficulties we faced.

Following are some of the most important lessons superintendents should take with them into the new year.

LESSON 1

Water management will make or break your greens.

No aspect of greens management is more critical. Yet on many courses, individuals charged with hand watering greens are summer hires. Most have little experience and less dedication. They learn fast. Unfortunately what they seem to learn first is that if they really pour the water to a green they may not have to come back later.

We should not expect computerized irrigation systems to achieve good water management on their

own. No system can be designed that accurately. For these reasons, many top superintendents revert to manual irrigation of their most troublesome greens for the balance of the summer. Truth is three or four well-trained and



dedicated hand water folks can apply water more accurately than the best computerized systems.

LESSON 2

Weak turf can be easily injured by normal practices.

This year even a tiny mistake could cause big problems. A slight miscalibration of a piece of application equipment, or just a little too much overlap often led to serious injury. In most years, these small mistakes might have caused a little streaking. This year, they resulted in dead turf. Many superintendents also suffered painful reminders regarding the application of pesticides during

bright sunlight and high heat. Often the carriers in pesticides can be mildly phytotoxic. On severely weak turf, mild can turn into extreme. Although the days may already be long, it is smart to wait to apply such products until evening or early-morning hours.

LESSON 3

Nematode problems are best attacked before damage occurs.

While nematode problems vary by region, in many parts of the country these pests are growing more troublesome. Not only have we lost the use of the most powerful and persistent pesticides, some of those we still can use have been diluted in that

the amount of active ingredient that can be applied has been reduced to much less effective rates. Combine this

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