

The membership newsletter on conversion

## Communication is a key ingredient

*As I said last month, I cannot stress enough the two basic factors that will lead to success. First, sell the greens chairman, committee and membership. Exhaustive research on the subject and presentation to the people who matter is the key: the greens chairman and his committee, the board and finally the membership in a membership meeting, as well as in a newsletter sent to the entire membership.*

*Naturally not all members will be at a membership meeting. It is vitally important to tell the members who were not at any face-to-face meeting about the program. I did that with several newsletters. The following newsletter was sent to the membership after we completed the program:*

To: Membership of the Merion Golf Club

From: Richard M. Bator, Course Superintendent

Date: September 6, 1990

Subject: Recap and Progress Report of East Course Fairway Bent Conversion Program

First of all, I would like to thank the membership for their patience and understanding during the two week period (August 6-17) in which we carried out the first stage of this program. I apologize for the partial closing of the course over a two week period, instead of the planned one week, but adverse weather conditions during the first week prevailed over our original planned starting and finishing dates.

Starting on August 13, and ending on August 16, all of the before mentioned (Newsletter No. 4) renovation and over-seeding procedures on fairways, collars and approaches have been completed one day ahead of schedule (four days or 45 hours), and exceeding my original planned time schedule.

Needless to say, I am more than pleased, not only with the completion dates, but also with the quick initial germination of the new seed (germination was three and one-half to four days), its uniformity in coverage, the lack of large areas of torn spots or damage, and the final general appearance of the existing fairways after they were completed. So far, it appears that we have gotten off to a good start during this initial stage of the transition.

The only real damaged areas that were incurred were in the first cut on the intermediate rough. This I expected, and was due to the slicing and aerification equipment, along with the puffiness and thatch that generally develops in an intermediate rough that consists of Poa and Bent. All areas void of turf have to be over-seeded with ryegrass, and should show full recovery in several weeks. Next season, the existing Poa-Bent population in these areas will be burnt off and over-seeded with a more desirable mixture of ryegrass.

The second, and most critical, stage of this renovation program will take place on October 1st when the first of three planned Fall applications of the Poa control herbicide, Prograss, will take place. The next applications will take place on October 23rd and November 15th.

This chemical will be applied at lower than recommended or full strength rates, and this is to lessen the chances of injuring the new Bent that was over-seeded. Also, by using lower rates, the death of the Poa will be more gradual and less drastic, and the turf will be more playable for the membership. It will be during this late Fall time frame that the actual death of the Poa will take place, and the newly seeded Bent will hopefully take over and fill in the voids of dead turf left by the disappearing Poa.

If our seed catch of new Bent continues to mature as I expect, the transition period from Poa to Bent could be smoother and quicker than I originally planned. But, a big "IF"! To enhance the maturity of the new Bent, the fairways will be fertilized every two to four weeks.

I do anticipate that certain small areas, especially lower No. 12 and the left side of No. 5 closest to the green, will at some point next season require some minor reseeded. These areas are in need of drainage, which will be completed this Fall, and are the main problem if a poor catch of new Bent does occur. This is not a major project, and will cause minimal disruption in play.

Winter rules will be in effect until further notice.

In closing, I would be remiss if I neglected to give thanks to our golf course staff for their dedicated efforts and contribution to the success of such a program. Each individual staff member had their own duty or responsibility to perform, and they all worked as a well-oiled machine and team, with a minimum of mistakes. Their tireless efforts in following a planned and calculated attack was, I feel, the key to our success during this initial stage. We can all be proud of their efforts.