

A New Irrigation System Improves Playing Conditions

Rockland Country Club
Matthew Ceplo, CGCS, superintendent

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Issue

The precision and effectiveness of golf course irrigation is heavily influenced by the irrigation system itself. With an irrigation system that was more than 25 years old, watering capabilities were limited at Rockland Country Club. The aging and antiquated system had poor uniformity and was unable to irrigate the rough areas. Poor coverage, uniformity issues and the lack of individual head control made irrigation very challenging. Due to the system's limitations, Superintendent Matt Ceplo, CGCS, was forced to program the irrigation to minimize the creation of wet areas. Unfortunately, programming to avoid wet areas often meant creating extremely dry areas that would go dormant and turn brown during summer. Dry, brown turf can provide excellent playing conditions, but cart traffic can seriously damage dry or dormant turf. A few brown spots are tolerable, but dead grass in tire tracks is not.



Installing a new irrigation system has improved playing conditions and turf health and has reduced maintenance costs.

Action

To address these issues, Rockland Country Club decided to install a new irrigation system as part of their comprehensive master plan. The new system included more than just new sprinkler heads; new pumps, main lines, lateral lines and swing joints were also installed. The new irrigation system design also improved coverage in the rough. In addition to improving coverage and uniformity, the new system also decreased the amount of time needed to water the golf course.

Results

Superintendent Matt Ceplo feels that the new irrigation system is the best investment the club has ever made. Turf managers at Rockland now have individual control over each sprinkler head, meaning water can be applied more uniformly and with much greater precision. As a result, playing conditions have improved and the issue of traffic damage in large areas of dry turf has been reduced. Expanding the irrigation system into the rough also made it possible to grow healthier and more uniform turf throughout summer. The new irrigation system is also much more reliable, which should reduce the annual repair costs associated with fixing leaks.

Proper planning was a critical factor in the project's success. Prior to installing the new irrigation system, the club developed a [comprehensive master plan](#) that included bunker renovations, cart path improvements, native area establishment, fairway expansions and several other improvements. The master plan provided a vision for what the golf course would look and play like in the future and created a roadmap for how to reach that goal. Installing a new irrigation system as part of the overall master plan ensured that the work was done efficiently, with minimal disruption to the course and that the project was coordinated with planned future improvements.