

TOUGH ROUGHS

Does your golf course look a little 'rough around the edges?' There's a way to polish that look, as proved by courses in Pittsburgh and Cleveland.



"On those areas I treated, it looked like someone spray-painted the intermediate roughs a dark green," says Ed Lach, of Edgewood Country Club.

If it's not one thing, it's another.

The trend toward lower fairway mowing heights and other cultural practices has created a neater, lusher fairway appearance and helped reduce *Poa annua* on many golf courses in the northern U.S. But better looking fairways only make shaggy or worn-out roughs look worse.

So after focusing their primary attention on fairways, greens and tees for many years, some golf course superintendents are now concentrating on getting their roughs up to par.

Penn State turf graduates Ed Lach and Terry Bonar are prime examples.

Since becoming golf course superintendent at Edgewood Country Club in Pittsburgh six years ago, Lach has upgraded the 18-hole golf course's overall appearance dramatically. Aesthetics have been improved by adding a number of flower and ornamental beds and planting additional trees throughout the roughs.

Building character

When Lach began contouring the fairways to "give them a bit of character," part of his fairways became the edges of his roughs. As such, they contained a high percentage of *Poa annua*. These largely *poa* intermediate rough areas take a beating during summer months, and there is a lack of definition between fairway and rough.

"Golfers tend to drive their carts along the edges of the fairways. Those areas suffer most from traffic damage," says Lach. "I've been overseeding with ryegrass for several years since ryegrass holds up much better to traffic. But I never had much luck getting a stand until two years ago."

In 1987, Lach sprayed the intermediate roughs around three of his fairways with Prograss herbicide. He made two applications in a 15-foot swath after aerifying and overseeding the areas.

"I really liked the results," says Lach. "Prograss killed the *Poa annua* so the ryegrass could take hold. There was a night-and-day difference the next spring between those three fairways and the rest of the course. On the areas I treated, it looked like someone had spray-painted the intermediate roughs a dark green. The ryegrass population increased to around 85 percent. I was so impressed I treated all of my intermediate roughs with Prograss the following year."

Lach is also updating his tree maintenance procedures. Instead of spending countless man-hours hand-trimming under trees, his crews spray a mixture of Roundup and Surflan in a neat circle around the trunks. As well



Timely aerification and fertilization, proper chemical applications and deeper, less frequent irrigation reduce *Poa annua* on Lach's course.

as saving time, the practice gives the course a neater appearance.

One improvement seems to lead to another. Lach says his next step is to move out another 15 feet into the rough with his Progress treatment so that he gradually converts most of his rough from *Poa annua* to ryegrass.

"When the rest of the course looks so good, it's hard to resist cleaning up the remaining rough," he explains.

And in Cleveland...

If it hadn't been for last summer's blistering drought, it would have taken Bonar much longer to improve roughs on Canterbury Golf Club's 18-hole course. Rough quality didn't measure up to the rest of the course, which is ranked in the top 100 courses in the country. With members playing up to 25,000 rounds annually and 11 national tournaments held on the course to date, it is continually in the spotlight.

Though Bonar has few problems with *Poa annua* on the course's bentgrass greens and fairways, he could never tackle the weed in his roughs. In spite of an intense six-year overseeding program involving cutting in ryegrass seed with a Rogers Groove Seeder, poa remained the primary grass in his roughs.

But the drought last year knocked the Canterbury roughs back to almost nothing. The double-row irrigation system only reaches part of the roughs and Bonar had no way to keep the poa alive.

"I decided to try Progress since it was almost a no-lose situation," says Bonar. "If the product didn't work, I was only out the money for chemical and application."

Before seeding in 1988, Bonar scal-

ped the roughs with rotary mowers set as low as they go—about one inch. He then aerified eight times with a tractor-drawn aerifier to really loosen up the soil. In late August, he started overseeding roughs with a mixture of three ryegrasses.

Bonar cut in about 80 pounds of ryegrass seed per acre with the Rogers unit and broadcast another 80 pounds per acre. His crews seeded 30 to 45 feet back from the fairway into the rough, covering about 25 acres of the course's 80 acres of rough.

Noticeable Improvements

Bonar made two Progress applications at one gallon per acre each, a month apart. He sprayed with a Cushman sprayer, covering 30 feet around each fairway. Though he seeded 25 acres, Bonar only sprayed 20 acres. The difference between the areas made an interesting test plot.

"There was a definite visual difference between the two areas the next spring," he notes. "Where we seeded and didn't spray, the ryegrass came up, but so did the poa. But where we seeded and sprayed, the poa is negligible. I was amazed with the results. Our roughs are thick and great now."

Now that his ryegrass stand in the roughs looks so good, Bonar says it makes the roughs around his greens look bad. He now wants to re-sod those areas with bluegrass.

He is improving other areas of the roughs as well. To round out his nine-member full-time crew, he hired an arboriculturist last year to take care of the trees scattered throughout the roughs. After identifying and tagging all 2000 trees over four inches wide, he now has an overview of how to better maintain them. **LM**

MOWING FOR BEAUTY

Changes in the mowing program have made the biggest differences in aesthetics at Pittsburgh's Edgewood Country Club.

"We switched from gang mowers pulled by a tractor to three Toro GM-3000 triplex mowers and one 350-D five-gang unit," says superintendent Ed Lach. "The old gang mowers would leave long, uncut grass in many little dips and valleys of the turf. This would often give a golfer an unfair lie on the fairway. Our triplex mowers allow us to cross-cut and angle-cut, leaving a neat, smooth appearance."

Daily routines

Now his crews mow half the fairways with triplex mowers and the other half with the 350-D one day. The following day, the procedure is reversed. They mow fairways six days a week at slightly lower than $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch and collect clippings with the triplex units.

Lach starts out every spring by rolling and aerifying all greens, tees and fairways and top dressing the greens. His crews also vertical mow and brush the greens several times each spring. Greens receive three or four "spikings" and light top dressings through the summer. Then fairways, greens and tees are aerified again after Labor Day.

Anti-poa campaign

Many of Lach's practices revolve around reducing populations of *Poa annua*. Annual bluegrass gained a foothold on the Edgewood course soon after it was built in the 1920s.

By following such cultural practices as timely aerification and fertilization, proper chemical applications, collecting clippings, and trying to irrigate more deeply and less frequently, Lach is slowly decreasing the amount of poa on his fairways, greens and tees. These practices reduce compaction, suppress seedhead formation and encourage deep-rooted turfgrasses such as bentgrass and ryegrass. □