

value on the tees, greens, fairways and clubhouse.

"Is your course environmentally friendly? I say, of course it is," says Hock.

"But have you told anybody?"

Greg Plotner, CGCS, Tampa Palms Golf & Country Club says a good first step is the formation of a "resources committee." The committee at Tampa Palms includes several staff members, a Hillsborough



Plotner: keeps turf at a higher cut than most.

County (Fla.) Extension Agent, and a fertilizer expert.

"You're going to bring in some people from the outside who are going to have a lot of expertise and talent," adds Peter V. Leuzinger, CGCS, St. Charles Country Club, near Chicago. "Combine them with the staff and talent that you have and you're going to have one heck of a program."

On-going communication, both within your course and

within community, is equally important.

Plotner suggests seeking opinions and member involvement with bulletin boards in the clubhouse or in the locker rooms. Leuzinger suggests newsletters and press releases.

"Don't be bashful about what you have. Tell your local communities" admonishes Dr. Winand Hock, director of the Pesticide Education Program at Penn State University.

"You the golf course superintendent is a local environmental expert. You know more than most of the people in your community about environmental conservation," he adds.

What price speed?

Superintendent Mark Kuhns reveals how his crew keeps historic Oakmont's greens so fast and true.

by Ron Hall,
Senior Editor

■ Few of us maintain greens as fast as those at the championship course at Oakmont Country Club, Oakmont, Pa. Nor should we.

But not many of us host a U.S. Open either, as Oakmont did in 1994, its seventh Open. Or have an annual budget of about \$1 million. (Actually there are two courses at Oakmont.) Or have *Poa annua* greens. Not *Poa annua* like many of us know it as a pesky annual weed grass, but perennial strains of *Poa annua*.

Okay, okay, enough already, we know—Oakmont does.

Certainly, green speed is not as vital for us as it is on a course that doesn't want to be brought to its knees by the likes of a Jack Nicklaus or a Greg Norman. Nonetheless, it's fascinating to hear how Mark



Kuhns: plays greens to check their speed.



The Greens at historic Oakmont Country Club are mowed twice, first with a riding mower then with a walking mower.

D. Kuhns, CGCS, makes the Oakmont greens so fast and true. He told fellow superintendents just that at the GCSAA Conference this past winter.

Kuhns says he tries to check each green daily, usually with a stimpmeter in one hand and a putter in the other.

"I like to see the ball roll on the green," he says. "I like to see if the ball is bouncing or if it's wavering left or right. Also, it gives me an indication, even without a stimpmeter, how fast a green is." And he's not afraid to roll greens to make sure putting conditions are consistent around the course.

Oakmont members like their *Poa annua* greens fast, real fast. Most members, in fact, are willing to sacrifice color

and lushness for a hint of brown if it means more speed.

Obligingly, Kuhns keeps the greens on the dry side. "The only reason we have the irrigation system is just to get by between rainfalls in my climate," he says. With only four inches of rootzone to work with anyway, he feels the turfgrass responds best to light, frequent watering, usually by hand.

Twice each season his crews aerify the greens with a Cushman Ransomes Ryan GA 60 unit with 3/8-inch four-inch tines. Once the Oakmont crew pulls the plugs, it turns the greens almost white with a top-dressing of pure sand. It's almost a week before the greens can be mowed again. The *Poa annua* is so tight, little of the

continued on page 10G

SPEED from page 7G

sand works down. Instead the grass grows through the sand. Oakmont has followed basically the same regimen since the mid-1970s.

"This is the sacrifice our members have to pay for the fast conditions that we try to maintain," explains Kuhns.

Crew members usually mow the greens twice daily, first with a Toro 3100, then with a Toro 1000 walker.

Although Kuhns says Oakmont is committed to using less chemicals, some preventive spraying is needed on the greens "for certain diseases." Other insect and disease controls are sprayed "as needed."

Kuhns estimates Oakmont's greens get 3½ to 4 lbs. of N per year. The greens are fed as they're aerified each spring and fall. This is supplemented by several liquid, foliar applications during the season. As Thanksgiving approaches, Kuhns puts



Galleries arrive early, even as the pins are being set, when Oakmont hosts a U.S. Open. It's been the scene of seven Opens.

down an application of Milorganite.

"If the demands of members are fast, fast, fast, it costs a lot of money and takes

a lot of time," admits Kuhns, who came to Oakmont about four years ago from Laurel Valley.

Renovating golf greens without wrecking careers



Prepare temporary greens well in advance of a renovation, according to James F. Moore and other golf course experts.

USGA Green Section suggests not forcing it down peoples' throats.

by Ron Hall,
Senior Editor

■ A major greens renovation project can be one of the most rewarding times in a superintendent's career. Or it can become a nightmare. How thoughtfully the superintendent prepares and educates the club's leadership often spells the difference between the two outcomes.

James F. Moore of the USGA Green Section offered suggestions about how a superintendent—more precisely his or her career—can survive a major greens renovation. About 300 superintendents listened to Moore, a former superintendent himself, at the GCSAA Conference this past winter.

"The number one reason why projects fail is because people don't take the time to get on the same page before the project starts," says Moore.

He admits that his observations are colored by some of the club membership squabbles and hard feelings that he's witnessed concerning the topic of greens renovations. In fact, the decision of whether to renovate or not can split a club's mem-