



Greens 'warm up' TO THE U.S. OPEN

by TERRY McIVER / Managing Editor

Steve Glossinger says he's "taken down the rear-view mirror," to help himself forget about the heat wave that was the summer of 1995.

He prefers to set his sights on a far more enjoyable prospect: preparing the South Course at Oakland Hills Country Club in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., for the 1996 U.S. Open Championship, June 10-16.

His main concern is to fine-tune a championship golf course for the arrival of the world's best players. Consequently, 60 to 70 percent of Glossinger's time is U.S. Open-related. Superintendent Jon Cuny manages the North Course, with Glossinger's supervision.

Warm the soil

As of April 2, Glossinger was trying to warm the soil beneath two greens in shaded areas.

"The turf on those two greens is in a more dormant state than the rest, and they usu-

ally lag behind in warming up. I put some covers on them to warm them, and to get some soil activity started. The problem with covers is, once you put them on you can't pull them off during this cold weather. So you take them off during the day, and put them on at night. We've had an unusually cold March and first part of April."

The course sustained very little disease damage from the snow and cold of 1996. "I would say we had a little desiccation,

but it hasn't appeared to injure the plant at all," says the GCSAA-certified superintendent. Greens were left uncovered during the winter, even with a top-flight championship on the way.

"We made a decision not to cover greens in winter," says Glossinger. "We knew what our results would be *without* covers, but not *with* them. I've seen these things backfire. You can leave the covers on too long, get some turf growth, take the cover

► 'Normally, you don't want a bus road going down the middle of your golf course,' laughs Steve Glossinger. The 12-foot-wide strip was installed on the North Course to help ease the transport of spectators. It will be removed after the championship.



◀ The Oakland Hill South Course was designed and built by Donald Ross. It opened in 1917. Shown is the No. 18 fairway, approaching the clubhouse.

off, and the cold air hits them, shocks the plant and brings in a little more disease pressure."

Greens maintenance

The typical Oakland Hills fairway is pinched in the middle with multiple sand bunkers. The fairways are 70 percent bentgrass and 30 percent *Poa trivialis*. The tees are close to 50/50 poa/bentgrass.

The native soil "push-up" greens are a 70/30 bentgrass/*Poa annua* (or annual bluegrass) mixture. That *Poa annua* was a challenge for Glossinger last year.

"It was tough, with the heat," Glossinger recalls. "When you get a summer like last year, it's hard to grow [*Poa annua*]."

"We tried to keep as much *Poa annua* alive as we could. In some areas, the weather took over. We saw poa die virtually right before our eyes. We'd syringe, and two hours later it was gone. Then the rain came late in the summer and drove all the oxygen out of the soil and the greens became saturated and had shallow rooting because of it; and then anaerobic conditions set in. It made for a terrible growing environment."

Relief from future heat waves may be in sight, thanks to a new bentgrass coming onto the market.

"We're looking at maybe regrassing with one of these newer bents, specifically the Penn G-2 variety. We may seed a practice green with G-2 after the U.S. Open."

Glossinger says the new bent has shown an aggressive growth quality that would be able to

▼ Steve Glossinger brought in these driving cages from the Pacific Rim company of Seattle, as temporary practice tees. Corporate tents cover the driving range during the championship.



crowd out the poa and be more resistant to heat stress.

Glossinger controls the poa with plant growth regulators and cultural practices.

"I prefer not to have it," admits Glossinger, "but one thing nice about poa, when you lose it, it comes back! You're never without a crop. And it's actually a pretty good putting surface at certain times of the year."

Tees are mowed at $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch; fairways at $\frac{1}{2}$ and greens at $\frac{1}{8}$. Collars are cut to a half-inch. Greens and collars are mowed with walk-behind units. Primary rough areas are

Green speed is up there

Glossinger's stimpmeter goal for the U.S. Open championship is between 10 and 11. "Any faster is unnecessary because of the contour of the greens," he says. "At those speeds, you can't do it for more than a short period of time. It puts a tremendous burden on the plant. Fortunately, we're [holding the championship] in mid-June, when plant root activity health are probably at their

peak. To host the U.S. Open in the Midwest, you couldn't ask for a better date. The *Poa annua* has finished its seeding; it's standing upright, the roots are still healthy, everything's good. After the championship, we'll take the speed back to about 9."

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"We have two golf courses, which means you have two staffs," explains Glossinger.

"The North Course will be used for parking. We'll still have to maintain it somewhat, but we'll back off [from full-scale North Course maintenance]. We'll have about 50 people in-house."

Special teams—one led by Dr. Trey Rogers of Michigan State University—will be on standby during the tournament. They must be ready to assist with landscaping duties within 10 minutes' notice.

Glossinger says certain areas of the golf course will have reduced wear, even with all the pedestrian traffic.

"The pros will be hitting from different [fairway] areas than the members hit from, they're not going to be using the members' tees, and there will be no golf carts on the course," which Glossinger calls "the superintendents' number one headache." □

four- to six-inches high.

Plenty of help

As is the case for all the major golf championships, committees handle duties unrelated to golf course turf, which removes much of the weight of the preparatory duties from Glossinger's shoulders.

"I have to attend the meetings, and I need to know the role of each committee," he explains. "But my main job is to make sure we have a championship golf course."

Extra help is ready to work the championship turf operations.