

Saying 'whoa' to plastic spikes

By RON HALL/ Managing Editor
ROLESVILLE, N.C.—Turfgrass breeder Dr. Joe Duich called for more study of alternative spikes on golf greens in light of the growing variety of alternative spikes. And the availability of new varieties of bentgrasses.

Duich said that some of these new creeping bentgrasses seem to resist spiking on greens—one of the biggest reasons for going "spikeless".

The turfgrass breeder spoke at the Turf-Seed, Inc., Field Day in Rolesville, NC, on June 26 concerning "the third generation of bentgrasses". Duich is a consultant with Tee-2-Green and was instrumental in developing, through the Penn State University breeding

program, new varieties like Penn A-1, Penn A-4, Penn A-6, Penn G-1, Penn G-2 and Penn G-6.

Duich said the new varieties offer better heat tolerance, and are finer textured and denser than previous bentgrasses. Duich recommended that the new varieties be mowed closer than say, Penncross. For instance, the Number 2 Donald Ross Course at Pinehurst is mowing its new bentgrass greens at 105/1000ths, and a course with A-4 greens in Virginia Beach is down to 110/1000ths, said Duich.

But it's the fact that they have a "very upright" growth habit that seems to cause them to resist spiking.

"The superintendents that are using them are stating that they're not seeing very much spiking on their greens," said Duich.

Tom Prewitt, manager of Cypress Lakes Golf Club, Hope Mills, NC, who was also at the Field Day, said he planted one green with A-4 in 1993, eight more greens in 1994 and the final 10 greens with A-4 in 1995. He said the new bentgrass greens are holding up well, even in North Carolina's summer heat.

"Spike marks are nonexistent," added Prewitt. "We can't force people to go spikeless. I don't know that spikeless is the answer anyway, especially on a public golf course. We're just not seeing spike marks" He said Cypress Lakes is a public course near Fayetteville, NC, and will probably get about 38,000 rounds this year.

Meanwhile, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) just released its survey of members concerning alternative spikes. The survey was conducted at the 1997 GCSAA in Las Vegas.

About 94 percent of the superintendents supported the use of alternative spikes, and indicated that within two years nearly half of all courses will ban metal spikes.

The movement is already underway at private courses where 45 percent of respondents claimed to have an alternative spikes policy. Only 13 percent of other respondents (from daily fee, municipal and resort facilities) reported requiring alternative spikes. Municipal and public courses are moving more cautiously, partly because of liability concerns.

While the spiking of greens is the primary impetus behind the move away from metal spikes, there are other issues. For instance, turf equipment mechanics say that lost metal spikes often end up on greens and damage their costly and finely calibrated mowers. □



Tom Prewitt, manager Cypress Lakes GC, Hope Mills, NC, and Dr. Joe Duich, right, say new bentgrasses seem to resist "spiking".

TG-CL gets Orkin LC

Downers Grove, Ill.—TruGreen-ChemLawn purchased Orkin's Plantscaping and Lawn Care divisions on July 24. TruGreen-ChemLawn is a subsidiary of ServiceMaster.

"We are excited about this acquisition, which represents a meaningful expansion of our largest and most profitable business unit," said ServiceMaster President and CEO Carlos Cantu. "It increases our market penetration in lawn care and plantscaping through the addition of 65,000 new customers. The acquisition...significantly enhances our competitive position in that business by nearly doubling our size."

TruGreen-ChemLawn is the leading lawn and landscape service company in the U.S., with more than 3 million customers and 324 service centers.