

Greens tips from pros

A panel of veteran superintendents at the 1997 Ohio Turfgrass Conference shared strategies that work for them.

By RON HALL/ Managing Editor

For better greens consider a triangle whose sides are customer satisfaction, a balanced management program, and consistency of play. Consider all three in your greens management program.

That message surfaced over and over again when a panel of respected superintendents explained their greens programs at the Ohio Turfgrass Conference this past December.

Bob Brame, USGA Green Section, Cincinnati, began the discussion by reminding the 300-plus superintendents in the audience to concentrate on providing their greens with the basics—a good growing environment (adequate sunlight and air movement), fertilization, mowing and water management.

The following are some of the greens strategies offered by the superintendents on the panel:

Matthew Shaffer, The Country Club, Cleveland, Ohio, hand waters greens. Greens are on “the edge of wilt at any given time.” He uses natural organic fertilizers (supplemented with micro-nutrients) on his greens, predicated on soil tests taken every other year, about 3 ½ lbs. N per year.

His crew mows with lightweight 19 inch Jacobsen walkers, and cuts every day, maintaining a height between 1/1000 of an inch and 1/25. On Thursday they usually begin double cutting and double rolling to increase speed for male members who want faster greens, maybe to high 10 or 11.

Shaffer believes in a regular and creative use of rollers, both Wylie and smooth. “We roll, we roll and we roll,” he said.

Gary Price, Snowshoe Mountain Resort, Slatyfork, W.Va., said “we try to stay away from any extremes. My overall philosophy is pretty simple.”

He double cuts some, keeping the height at 135 to 140, and rolls some.

“Our members want a true playing surface and decent speed,” he said. Price insists on keeping mowers lapped and properly adjusted. Edges get faced weekly.

Mark Kuhns, Oakmont Country Club, Oakmont, Pa., hosted the 1994 U.S. Open. Kuhn also favors hand watering because it keeps the greens firm. “You’d be surprised how far you can actually stress greens,” he said. He tries to maintain greens at 11 every day. The stimpmeter is *his* tool. He doesn’t



Gary Price: no extremes

Don't skip that mowing

Terry Buchen, Terry Buchen Golf Agronomy, Williamsburg, Va., said that if a green is not mowed on Monday, it will not be back to the same condition (speed, firmness or smoothness) until at least Wednesday.

“The best conditioned courses get double cut at least every other day,” he said at the Ohio Turfgrass Conference:

Other trends he offered:

- ▶ a move by superintendents toward heavier greens mowers,
- ▶ more use of vibratory rollers on triplex greens mowers,
- ▶ top-dressing about once a week, at least once every two weeks, with many superintendents using straight sand,
- ▶ increased popularity of the Bioject system for

disease control; also good reviews for Heritage fungicide,

- ▶ increased use of fertigation because of improved systems,
- ▶ shorter cuts for greens collars,
- ▶ green speed of 9 feet or faster to keep golfers happy.



Terry Buchen sees shorter cuts on collars.

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think it's a good idea for anybody else on the course to be stimping the greens. (A sentiment that several of the panelists heartily endorsed.)

The Oakmont crew aerifies twice a year, and fills the holes with pure sand. Sand is broomed and watered in until holes are completely filled.

The Oakmont greens get about 3½ lb. N per year, most applied as a starter fertilizer after aerifications, supplemented with a dormant feeding of Milorganite the first or second week of December to bring turf back in spring.

Oakmont greens are double cut daily. Kuhns starts the season at ⅛ inch, bottoms out at ⅜, then brings it back to about ¼ by mid July or August.

He credited the fungicide Heritage with allowing him to control anthracnose and summer patch this past season.

Edward Odorizzi, The Country Club at Muirfield Village, Dublin, Ohio, says his course is blessed with "a great mechanic," and that his mowers are in top shape to mow daily, ⅛ inch, a bit lower in summer. That's one reason why his greens are generally regarded as some of the best in central Ohio. Another, and important factor, he said, is the open nature of his course—lots of sunshine.

He aerifies three times a year, twice with a Toro greens aerifier and once in late fall with a Floyd McKay unit. His crew topdresses with straight sand every three or four weeks.

His fertility program is about 5½ lbs. nitrogen, 2 lbs. phosphorus and 11 lbs. of potassium a year.

Terry Bonar, Canterbury Country Club, Cleve-



Mark Kuhns says stimp-meter is a super's tool.

land, has hosted several USGA and PGA tour events. "Topdressing is very important for us," he said. "We topdress a target of nine to 10 times a year. We've been using the same rootzone mix for over 25 years."

Bonar said he favors spoon-feeding in summer, about ⅓ lb. N. per week using a 20-20-20 Peters product. Depending on carry over, he may cut back to half that amount, or perhaps just iron. "I can look at them (greens) on Wednesday and decide how much to put on them on Thursday," said Bonar.

Daconil has been his fungicide of choice, sprayed weekly. It eliminated dollar spot and brown patch this past season. The fungicide Heritage cleared up a developing problem with anthracnose, he added.

He tries to maintain green speed at 9½ to 10½ every day. "If you're consistent every day and you have a decent speed, they're (the members) not as concerned about what the roll is today," he said.

Joe Baidy, Acacia Country Club, Cleveland, and a former president of the GCSAA, believes a superintendent has to build some flexibility into his/her program. "I do what the grass plant needs," he said.

Baidy started this past season mowing at ⅛ and went down to ⅜. He said that mowers are checked daily, lapped when needed. The Acacia crew double mows on Wednesdays and on weekends and for tournaments, and rolls several times a week.

Baidy believes in spoon feeding turf each week in the summer, and uses Primo growth regulator every two weeks. He aerifies in spring and fall and topdresses every two or three weeks.

"Understand what your membership wants, and give them what they need," said Baidy. □



Terry Bonar seeks consistent rootzone mix.



Joe Baidy: understand what members want.



Ed Odorizzi thankful for a great mechanic.