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

or 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.

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



Terry Buchen sees shorter cuts on collars.

Wednesday.

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

(speed, firmness or smoothness) until at least

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.

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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 ¹¹⁵/₀₀₀ of an inch and 125. 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

Gary Price: no extremes

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 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 % inch, bottoms out at %4, then brings it back to about %4 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



Ed Odorizzi thankful for a great mechanic.

with "a great mechanic," and that his mowers are in top shape to to mow daily, ¼ 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

Mark Kuhns says stimp-

meter is a super's tool.

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.

sunshine.

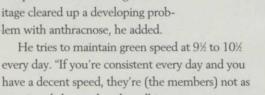
His fertility program is about 5½ lbs. nitrogen, 2 lbs. phosphorus and 11 lbs. of potassium a year.

Terry Bonar, Canterbury Country Club, Cleve-

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 ½ 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.

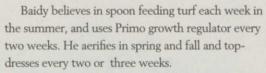
Daconil has been his fungicide of choice, sprayed weekly. It eliminated dollar spot and brown patch this past season. The fungicide Heritage cleared up a developing problem with anthracnose, he added.



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 ¼ and went down to ¼6. 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.



"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.