

TURF TWISTERS

PUTTING GREEN SPECIFICATIONS

Question: As a golf course architect, I am most interested in the USGA Specifications for Putting Green Construction. I have contacted a local soil testing laboratory and enclose a copy of their letter. Would you care to comment? (CALIFORNIA).

Answer: We were very much interested in the information supplied by your local soil testing laboratory. We sincerely wish them well in their belief that their "services would improve the performance of putting greens." Nevertheless, the construction method recommended by the USGA Green Section is just as "guaranteed" as any practical method now known.

It may be of interest to review some of the background in soil studies for putting green use. For the past twelve years, the USGA has sponsored research at universities throughout the country on this subject. Before the Specifications were published, they were reviewed by several of the outstanding soil physicists and agronomists at universities throughout the country. The Specifications are sound, documented and will withstand the test of time.

After the Specifications were published, a number of soil laboratories and "soil experts" claimed that they could carry out all of the tests as recommended by the USGA Green Section. In some instances, soil laboratories have also claimed that they could "improve upon" these Specifications. In other words, there was a sudden rash of "experts" on the subject. They apparently have "all the answers" but very little research in this specific area to back them up.

The Green Section has no direct argument with such laboratories or soil experts in their recommendations. Similarly, there is no control over golf course architects or construction firms wishing to follow such recommendations. However, we do strongly object to misuse of the term "USGA Specifications will be used in construction." This has happened a number of times and the final product has been less than satisfactory. The USGA Green Section has been criticized where, in fact, our Specifications were not followed.

In conclusion, the Specifications are just as applicable in Alaska as they are in New York, Illinois, Texas or California. They should be followed exactly as outlined, including the all-important physical soil analysis. Any Green Section office will be happy to send you the names of laboratories that have provided satisfactory physical analysis work based on our Specifications.