

TURF TWISTERS

MOWING BERMUDAGRASS

Question: Would you give me your recommendations as to height for the cutting of solid bermuda fairways. I note from the instructions of the booklet for the qualifying rounds of the Open and Amateur Championship that the USGA recommends fairways be cut 1/2 inch to 3/4 inch. (ARKANSAS)

Answer: We believe that bermudagrass should be mowed just about as closely as possible without scalping. This will vary depending upon such things as roughness of the surface, the amount of fertilizer used, the frequency of mowing, etc. Infrequent mowing or exceptionally heavy fertilization will cause a large amount of clippings to be removed at one time. In such a case we believe the mowers should be raised to compensate. However, so long as the clippings will largely disappear in the turf, we think the closer the better.

MOWING GREENS

Question: The golf course superintendent at our club tells us that he mows greens at 1/4 inch. At a neighboring club, the greens are mowed at 5/16 inch, yet their greens seem faster than ours. Can you explain? (MISSOURI)

Answer: The true cutting height of a mower is established by placing a straight-edge across the caster wheels or the scalping roller and the drive roller. The height of the cutting edge above this line is the true cutting height.

Now the "effective cutting height" may be quite different. It is influenced by the amount of turf on the green — a dense turf will cause the mower to cut higher than will a thin turf. It is also influenced by the weight of the mower and even by the amount of clippings carried in the catcher.

Other things may also influence speed of putting greens. An upright grass will provide a slower surface than grass which tends to lie flat. Stiffer grass does not allow the ball to roll as freely as soft grass. Thus it is quite possible for a green cut with a mower set at 5/16 inch to be faster than another cut with a mower set at 1/4 inch.