



*There has not been very much aerification in the past; however, the purchase of a new punch machine by the Argentine Golf Association will change this trend.*

## *Turfgrass Management in the Argentine*

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**N**o fumar, abroche el cinturón, por favor. Fasten your seat belts, we are approaching Buenos Aires! This was good news, because we had been on Aerolineas Argentinas for 12 hours and we were eager to have our feet on the ground again. We had left Miami about 2 a.m. one day last fall and made intermediate stops in Lima, Peru, and Santiago, Chile, before flying over the tall and rough Andes to Buenos Aires.

The flight was very smooth, but the cabin crew was different from what we are accustomed to in the United States. The stewardesses were much older than their American counterparts and a steward was in charge of the cabin.

The immigration facilities were very efficient and we were given the VIP treatment. No doubt this was because I was invited to Argentina by the Asociacion Argentina de Golf to visit member clubs during a 2-week stay and to take special note of the site of the World Amateur Team Championship at Olivos Country Club near Buenos Aires. My wife

accompanied me and we thoroughly enjoyed the two weeks. We learned a great many things about a beautiful country we had never seen before.

The climate in Buenos Aires is very similar to the southern part of our country along the 34th parallel. The population of Buenos Aires is about 4½ million; the population of the entire metropolitan area is about 8½ million. The language is Spanish and much of the early Spanish influence can still be seen in the interior of the country, such as at Cordoba and Rosario. Since we did not speak Spanish, we had an interpreter at every golf course visit. In this manner, we conversed with the golf course representatives and answered their many questions. We visited 17 golf courses in all with many other side trips.

The design of Argentine golf courses is very striking, and they are quite similar to our own. Most were built 50 to 70 years ago when Argentina was a European resort area. Many of



*Design and strategy of play equal to most courses even though many were built 50 to 70 years ago.*

the courses were built near railroads, since the people would leave town to spend the weekend at the Country Club. Many members still have a home in town and another in the country.

Just prior to our arrival, revolutionists had tried to destroy two of the country clubs in the belief that they were a symbol of capitalism. They were successful in blowing the top out of one clubhouse, and a large hole in another. Earlier they had completely demolished another club. Many of the clubhouses are built in an English style of architecture, while others have attractive Spanish design, with adobe walls and tile roofs.

We observed bunkers where railroad ties or some sort of piling created a very abrupt wall. One bunker at Mar del Plata had been built 70 years ago and still exists, with the wall six to eight feet high. Of all the clubs we visited, the Jockey Club was the largest with 36 holes. It was designed about 65 to 70 years ago. It is very similar to the golf courses built here 40 to 50 years ago.

Monetary inflation exists in Argentina, and it seems to be more critical than our own. The Argentinians have not been able to use chemicals to maintain their courses on the same level as ours, but interest is building and no doubt chemicals will be used to control grassy weeds,

such as crabgrass and dallisgrass. Their golfers enjoy the game as much as any we have and good turf is important to them.

Olivos Country Club, the site of the World Team Championship, is about 20 to 30 miles from Buenos Aires. The basic grass on the greens is bent, consisting of Coos or Pennncross. Other clubs have common bermuda on their greens, or Tifgreen, or a bermuda selection from Brazil. The fairway grass is usually common bermudagrass, but Tifgreen is being increased rapidly, and no doubt some fairways will soon be Tifgreen. We observed Tifdwarf being increased in a nursery, and only time will tell if it will be satisfactory. Tifway is not in Argentina as yet, but I am sure it will be eventually.

During our visit to the Olivos Country Club, the greens were being aerified by an American-made machine which the Argentina Golf Association had purchased for its members. In our country, this aerifier costs about \$2,000, but in Argentina its price is close to \$6,000. Since the Association purchased the machine, member clubs will be able to use it for thorough putting green aerification, which is badly needed. They have not been able to aerify or cultivate in the past except with solid

punch aerators.

Equipment from the United States is so expensive that most of their turf maintenance machinery is purchased from Europe. At present, no equipment for golf courses is being manufactured in Argentina, and there is maximum use of all equipment since replacement is so difficult.

We saw two greens being constructed according to USGA Green Section Specifications, and no doubt others will be in the future. In the past, the soil media for the greens was usually of very high clay content, but a sandy soil mixture will be used in the future where water is plentiful.

We saw new mower blades being placed in reels by mechanics and then ground and sharpened by the maintenance men. This indicates know-how and ingenuity is available, and, it allows them to cope with equipment supply difficulties. How would our clubs fare under such restrictions? I'm sure we could do it if we had to! I did not see any hydraulic-operated fairway units; however, I did see 11 fairway units being operated at one time, but this was limited to a flat, open golf course.

Buenos Aires is on the 34th latitude South of the equator and our 34th latitude is just North of Atlanta, Georgia. I observed many species of grasses very similar or the same as seen on golf courses in this area. If you check a map, you will find that Argentina extends over 3,000 miles north and south from almost the tropics to the tundra.

Two weeds observed throughout the trip were white clover and *Poa annua*. I did not see goosegrass or crowfoot, however *Poa annua* was on practically every course. Other weeds were white clover, dallisgrass, carpetweed, and various sedge-like plants. One I recall was a pest called "hog's hair"; it belonged to the *Juncus*. It was a very aggressive sort, and in some

instances greens were renovated to get rid of it. However, herbicides should eliminate it in bermudagrass greens.

Fertilization of fairways is minimal, with some receiving no more than one pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per year consisting of a complete fertilizer or nitrogen alone. The soils near Buenos Aires are naturally fertile, and therefore they do not follow fertilization practices similar to ours. Some of the best fairways were on a municipal course near downtown Buenos Aires where play was the heaviest of any course we visited.

We saw some bermudagrass greens in the Rosario area that had small, round, dead areas in undecomposed organic material. On examining them with a soil prober, layers of organic material and dead, black rhizomes and underground parts of bermudagrass were prevalent. In the upper South, we would consider this a typical Spring Deadspot area. Weeds had grown back into these typical areas. A thorough aeration would be quite helpful since these greens have not been aerified. We observed some hand spiking equipment, but it is used only in problem areas where the ground becomes extremely hard and the grass is thinned out or dies.

Interest in golf seems to be increasing in Argentina, and no doubt the World Amateur Team Championships has been an influence. The people we met were very friendly and helpful at all times. It was unfortunate that we could not speak their language; however, we always found someone who could understand some English. We felt very uneducated to be confined to only one language. Would I go again? Indeed I would! I have always wanted to visit South America, but never dreamed that golf would make it a reality. We met many very interesting people and enjoyed the excellent hospitality of the Argentine.

*Bunkers with walls made from piling or other material are not new as this 6 to 8 foot wall was built about 70 years ago.*

