

6. Reduced earthworm activity.
7. Elimination of black algae.
8. Increased cold and desiccation tolerance.

Sulfur investigations are continuing and it is hoped that more specific reasons for S activity can be clearly defined. Golf course superintendents have been advised to proceed with some caution since variable soil conditions, other chemical programs, and management practices may influence results.

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**A GREEN SECTION  
SUPPORTED  
RESEARCH PROJECT**

# “TOUCHDOWN!”

## A New Bluegrass for Golf

by **ALEXANDER M. RADKO, DR. C. REED FUNK,  
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The release of a new turfgrass variety is always an exciting event. It is the culmination of years of testing, research, and rigid evaluation pitting the new experimental turfgrass against all others which include experimental as well as standard commercial varieties. When one particular grass stands out in this evaluation procedure, it has to be a plant worthy of note and potential release to the turf industry. Such an exceptional turfgrass is Touchdown, a new Kentucky bluegrass selection released jointly by Rutgers University and the United States Golf Association Green Section.

What sets this grass apart from others? According to Dr. Funk, Touchdown growing in New Jersey exhibits good resistance to the following major diseases that attack bluegrasses:

- (1) Leaf spot (*Helminthosporium vagans*)
- (2) Leaf rust (*Puccinia poae-nemoralis*)
- (3) Powdery mildew (*Erysiphe graminis*)
- (4) Stripe smut (*Ustilago striiformis*)

Although Touchdown is not resistant to *Fusarium* blight caused by *Fusarium roseum* and *F. tricinctum* (no bluegrasses are), it does appear to get less of this disease than average.

Touchdown is a medium-low turf-type Kentucky

bluegrass having upright leaves. Its leaf width is slightly finer than Merion. Touchdown has a pleasing bright medium dark green, whose color greens-up earlier in the spring and stays longer in the fall than does Merion. Under moderate fertility, this new Kentucky bluegrass variety has excellent density and good aggressiveness.

The story of Touchdown started in 1908 in Southampton, N.Y. on Long Island, when the renowned National Golf Links of America, a Charles Blair Macdonald creation, was built and seeded. In those days



*Tom Rewinski, Superintendent of the National Golf Links of America, on the 9th fairway where Touchdown was discovered.*



*The clubs extended from and touching the golf bag indicate the original size of the Touchdown plot when first discovered by Superintendent Rewinski. The clubs laid on the turf to the far right and far left show how big the clone has grown to-date—now measuring approximately 30 feet in diameter.*

turfgrass seed production was not as sophisticated as it is today and seed was bulk-harvested from open fields and marketed. Seed lots contained a variety of progeny from whatever was growing in that particular seed field. Perhaps somewhere in this rather heterogenous seed lot that was to produce the fairway turf on the National Golf Links in 1908 was the beginnings of the new elite Kentucky bluegrass now named Touchdown.

Once planted, the fairway turf matured and individual pure clones developed over the years. The clone that was to become Touchdown (Rutgers experimental number P-142) continued to sprout rhizomes and spread, crowding out the other grasses in the fairway until, at the time of its selection in 1969 from the 9th fairway at the National, it covered an area approximately 30 feet across! This development and growth underscores the innate vigor and overall disease resistance of this grass under an intensive, low-cut fairway management program.

Credit for the discovery of this new Kentucky bluegrass variety belongs to Thomas F. Rewinski, superintendent of the National Golf Links of America. Mr. Rewinski has been associated with the club beginning in 1938 as a caddy. After completing a tour of duty in the Navy, he returned to the club in 1951 and became superintendent in 1958. It was under his watchful eye that the overall performance of this promising low-growing fairway-type turfgrass

was first judged. It was pointed out to Alexander M. Radko, USGA Green Section Agronomist and National Research Director. After several inspections, Mr. Radko informed Dr. C. Reed Funk and a sample was entered into the Rutgers University turfgrass research and testing facility, in a project which is supported in part by the U.S.G.A. Green Section Research and Education Fund, Inc. Its ratings were continuously high at Rutgers and in other tests at other regional turfgrass experiment stations. As a result of its fine turf performance and potential, Pickseed West Inc. expressed interest and an agreement was entered into for the marketing privileges for this new variety of Kentucky bluegrass which subsequently was named *Touchdown*. Breeder to foundation seed was produced in the Madras area of Oregon. Establishment vigor of P-142-Touchdown was evident when a September seeding produced a subsequent seed crop in excess of 600 pounds per acre. After the 1975 harvest there should be sufficient seed available for limited use by the professional turfgrass industry. We believe it has a place in areas where Kentucky bluegrasses are grown.

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