

# A Golf Course Superintendent's Role in Good Golfing Turf

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by MICHAEL R. BAVIER, CGCS, Inverness Golf Club, Illinois  
Past President, GCSAA

**O**NLY THOSE GOLF course superintendents who consistently have good golfing turf will be around to play a future role at their golf facilities. The others will be looking for work. The golf course superintendent, more than ever before, must produce a course that is playable day in and day out. It has been said, and generally agreed, that the golf course is the most important single part of every golf club operation. Granted, many clubs have excellent food services and other niceties that go along with a super facility, but the golfer, who is the mainstay of the club, demands a good course. He enjoys playing the course for whatever reason, and, in most instances, he is proud of it. A similar reaction probably is felt by public fee golfers. They are not members of a club, but they deserve and enjoy playing a well-conditioned course. That's where our role as professional turfgrass people comes into play. We must maintain high standards and make our courses as playable and enjoyable as possible.

The way we have gone about this has changed over the years. Not long ago we pulled hoses and sprinklers around to water greens, tees, and sometimes fairways. We are now blessed with computer-controlled irrigation systems to apply the proper amount of water at the proper time. This has helped considerably in the management of our courses. Hopefully, the golfers have noticed it as well. In fact, a number of studies have been conducted recently that show that with automatic systems, 50 percent less water is used than with a manual system.

The selection of chemicals and fertilizers for turfgrasses has improved tremendously over the years. We now have a specific chemical to control

snowmold, pythium, and just about any other disease, unless, of course, you had C-15 dieback at your course last year! Fertilizers are so varied today that you can pick one that has slow release nitrogen, another with fast release, water soluble, water insoluble, etc. Our role has changed in that the turf manager must know what product is best for each specific situation. Added to this are other responsibilities, such as improvements in machinery, how to run each one properly, and how to maintain each expensive piece. Our role continues to become more involved, but our goal still stands — to produce good turf for the golfer.

**T**HE TREMENDOUS variety of grasses that have come on the market in the last several years has helped many of us improve the turf at our clubs. We now select the variety that best fits the need, one with the desired texture or color; a strain that is resistant to a certain disease; one that is heat tolerant; one that stands up under a lot of traffic. We now have the opportunity to pick the type of grass for a specific situation.

For example, in the Palm Springs, California, area, improved perennial ryegrass is used almost exclusively today in overseeding programs. Just a few years ago, annual rye was used because the new perennial hybrids were not available. In striving for better playing conditions, the new improved perennial breed was developed and given a chance. As it looks now, very little annual ryegrass will be used on the western desert courses for overseeding in the years ahead.

The cost of the different ryegrass overseeding programs is very comparable. At first glance, when one

compares the cost per pound of annual ryegrass seed versus perennial rye, one finds a big difference! However, the number of seeds per pound must be taken into consideration. Less fertilizer is also needed for the perennials. Perhaps the greatest difference between the two grasses is the ability of the perennial to withstand traffic. Thus, we have produced a higher-quality turf, desired by the golfer at a cost that is quite comparable.

An incident that has had a lot of publicity during the past year, the C-15 problem, has ruined more good golf greens than one wants to remember. Through the collective funding of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, the United States Golf Association, and the Chicago District Golf Association, a team was put together to investigate the cause of C-15 dieback. Though much has been learned, concrete information is yet unavailable from the team or from any other outside agents.

Few courses in the Midwest have much C-15 Toronto bentgrass left in their greens. Superintendents in the area have either seeded or sodded their C-15 greens with one of the improved seed-type bentgrasses. One quickly realizes that adjustments have to be made in this business. In a crisis situation like the C-15 or in a non-crisis situation like the ryegrasses, the superintendent must adjust and make the best of the problems that confront him.

**T**URF MANAGERS who accept problems and meet challenges as they come forth will always do well. Those who stay attuned to new techniques and continue their educational process, either through classroom train-

ing or practical experience will, in most cases, be able to cope with the ever-changing role the golf course superintendent plays in growing fine turf.

You must continue to use all the information available to you. Take advantage of the opportunities that are offered. Use the reference material that the GCSAA has available. Call upon

the USGA Green Section. Investigate each avenue of approach. Try different ways. Be open minded. Ask a friend for ideas. Your role is ever-changing because the future is ever-changing. Manage change by keeping up with it. Your entire future will be enhanced tremendously if you will adopt this outlook.

