

Curbing Those Carts

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A simple, convenient method to ensure the proper location of tee markers.



Reflectors placed at the edge of cart paths help prevent carts from damaging adjacent turf.

THOUGH some argue that golf course management in Florida is like nowhere else in the country, a number of its concerns are common to all golf courses. The following three items observed over the past year could help provide better conditions for golfers at any course.

Discussions about course maintenance operations almost always include the topic of labor. Developing and keeping a competent staff seems to be a common problem throughout the game. The available work force most often has a limited knowledge of the game of golf, and it is usually good practice to simplify even the most routine course management operations. Tee marker alignment is just such an operation. Although it might be a minor consideration, poor tee marker alignment can contribute to an overall impression of untidiness and poor management.

Mike Bailey, golf course superintendent at The Falls Country Club, in West Palm Beach, Florida, has a very simple means of making sure tee markers are properly and uniformly set. He has developed a T made with PVC which is carried on the triplex unit used for mowing tees. After the operator has finished mowing the tee surface, the T is placed on the ground and aligned toward the center line of the fairway landing area, or at the flagstick in the

case of par-3 holes. With this device, it is easy to determine the proper alignment of the tee markers. Attention to such detail ensures that golfers will find tee marker placement as consistent as possible.

Another problem common to most golf courses is the turf wear along the edges of cart paths caused by golf carts and maintenance equipment. Golfers seem to have a natural tendency to pull their carts off the edges of the cart paths, particularly near tees and greens. Over the years a variety of techniques have been tried to minimize this damage, including permanent curbing, the use of ropes and chains, and the establishment of traffic control flow patterns. Generally these traffic control measures are objectionable, because they require significant work in their application, interfere with other course maintenance operations, or have an unsightly appearance. Mark Black, golf course superintendent at the Bonita Bay Club, in Naples, Florida, has discovered an effective, low-cost, unobtrusive method for controlling traffic along the edges of cart paths. Black has found that small reflector units, commonly used by highway departments, aligned along the edges of the paths reduces the tendency for golf carts and maintenance equipment to operate or park off the paving. The reflectors are epoxied directly onto the cart path surface, approximately two

inches from the edge. Once in place, no additional maintenance is required. Several other courses have taken these reflectors one step further, and are using different colored markers to designate the recommended stopping points throughout the course. This practice is helping improve traffic flow patterns and speed play, especially around putting green complexes, because golfers are not wasting time going back to their carts before proceeding to the next hole.

The final turf tip does not actually involve turf at all. Over the past 10 to 15 years, golf course superintendents have made great strides in improving their image. Sometimes, however, people are left with a very unprofessional image when they try to reach them by telephone. Oftentimes the phone is not answered at all, or the crew member who answers has difficulty in taking down or passing on important messages. A simple way to improve this communication problem is to install an answering machine. As with other electronic equipment, the price of these machines has dropped over the years, and many units can be bought at reasonable prices. A short, simple statement identifying the superintendent and club, along with a message stating that calls will be returned as soon as possible, is an easy way to ensure good lines of communication.