

An Overseeding Alternative — Roughs Only

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THE DECISION to overseed bermudagrass fairways each fall is often driven by the membership's desire to play on a green golf course during the winter season. This strong desire for green color exists in spite of the excellent quality playing conditions offered by dormant bermudagrass. Unfortunately, what the membership fails to appreciate is that perennial ryegrass overseeding has the potential for seriously inhibiting bermudagrass fairway turf during spring green-up. The damage resulting from perennial ryegrass competition for available water and nutrients in the spring is known as poor spring transition. Furthermore, in order to complete fairway overseeding, the course should be closed for three to five weeks during the fall so the ryegrass can establish itself. In short, the member-

ship is gambling against nature in the spring, and sacrificing several weeks of prime playing conditions in the fall, for the sake of winter color.

On golf courses that don't overseed, it is necessary to prevent the establishment of winter annuals, such as *Poa annua*, with a selective herbicide. While such a herbicide program is highly recommended because it enhances the health and vigor of bermudagrass, there is usually a lack of definition between fairways and roughs, giving the course an unattractive appearance, which in turn generates great uneasiness among the membership. In such situations the superintendent can easily attract a few unkind comments.

An alternative worth considering is to overseed the roughs only. Rough overseeding spares the bermudagrass fair-

ways from possible spring transition problems and gives the entire course an exciting appearance during the winter season. In addition, interruption of play during the fall for fairway overseeding and establishment is minimized, because the fairways are left open for regular play.

In order to be successful with this overseeding alternative, two prerequisites are necessary. The first is to have an irrigation system that can water the rough independently of the fairways. The second is that the fairways must have adequate drainage. These two prerequisites are necessary to prevent the dormant fairways from becoming waterlogged during the winter.

Give this overseeding alternative some serious thought as you plan ahead for next year's winter color.

Overseeding the roughs instead of the fairways produces excellent definition while avoiding many of the pitfalls of fairway overseeding.



Poor response of bermudagrass during the spring transition is one of the drawbacks of fairway overseeding.

