

Environmental Opportunities in the 1990s

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FOR THE TENTH CONSECUTIVE YEAR the annual Green Section Education Conference was held in conjunction with the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America International Turfgrass Conference and Show. This year more than 1000 people attended the Green Section's program on Tuesday, February 12, at the Las Vegas Convention Center. Raymond B. Anderson, Chairman of the USGA Green Section Committee, introduced the morning's program of 17 speakers who addressed this year's theme, "Environmental Opportunities in the 1990s." With environmental concerns becoming increasingly more of an issue on golf courses, the topics in this year's program were especially timely for many in the audience. Following are the full proceedings.

THE BEST TURF TIPS OF 1990 — PART I

One of the most popular annual features of the Education Conference is the Best Turf Tips. This year, 11 of the Green Section's agronomists reported on some of the helpful ideas and ingenious innovations they came across while visiting golf course superintendents in every part of the country during 1990. We begin with Part I. Parts II and III appear later in this issue.

Take a Hike!

by LARRY W. GILHULY

Director, Western Region, USGA Green Section

THERE IS something very special about a golf course in the early hours of the day. The still of this domain is broken only by the rhythmic sounds of the irrigation system or various wildlife beginning yet another day of activity. It is at this time of the day when the golf course maintenance staff begins the process of daily course preparation: greens to mow, holes to change, tee blocks to move, tees and fairways to mow, and bunkers to rake. These activities prepare the course for the thundering herd of golfers who will require that this process be repeated the next day.

It is also the time of the day when the golf course superintendent has his best opportunity to view the course. All too often, time demands of the job, inclement weather, meetings, and the urge to

simply "drive" the golf course, prevent many superintendents from viewing the course on foot. What benefits can be derived from walking the golf course each morning for approximately two hours?

1. Keeping abreast of disease or insect activity or other extraordinary environmental conditions. In some cases, a fast response can make the difference between turf loss and survival.

2. Ensuring desired course playability. Are the bunkers raked properly, the holes located in fair positions, the tee blocks aligned properly, and all areas mowed in front of play?

3. Education of the maintenance staff. As the course is viewed, mistakes can be quickly rectified *in the field*. It is far more effective to discuss the desired changes in the maintenance

employee's element, rather than in the superintendent's office.

4. Motivation of the maintenance staff. If the superintendent walks the course every morning, the staff will always be more aware of detail and output.

5. Exercise. A brisk, two-hour walk is great for the body and spirit.

6. Membership accessibility and public relations. Early morning players notice and respond favorably to a superintendent who walks the course. Contact with players offers a method of education that is not available from a moving vehicle or a warm office.

Far too many golf course superintendents rely on vehicular transportation to view the golf course. Many do not see the course on a daily basis for justifiable reasons. If a committed

Problem areas on the golf course can be easily overlooked when viewed only from a golf cart.

decision is made, however, these two hours of every day can be the backbone of the maintenance program.

Mr. Milt Bauman, retired CGCS and 1981 GCSAA Distinguished Service Award recipient, followed this basic principle during his 45 years in the golf course maintenance business. To quote this successful superintendent, "Anyone can think of an excuse not to walk the golf course. The successful superintendent looks not for excuses, but for results!"



Working the Topdressing In and Rolling Greens Revisited

by JOHN H. FOY

Director, Florida State Region, USGA Green Section

DEEP AERIFICATION of putting greens has become a popular practice during the past several years. The ability of deep aerification equipment to punch through soil layers and improve both water percolation rates and soil oxygen content is an advantage when managing problem greens. Furthermore, when a proper topdressing material is worked into the aerification holes, the physical characteristics of a root zone mix can be gradually modified and improved.

In observing deep aerification operations on Florida golf courses for the past several years, a couple of logistical problems have been noted. First, the green surface is often very soft and easily rutted by topdressing application equipment, particularly following deep aerification with a Verti-Drain unit. Making the topdressing applications prior to conducting the deep-tine operation is a simple solution to this problem. It is also apparent that when the surface is topdressed prior to deep aerification, rutting from aerification equipment is minimized.

These concerns are somewhat minor compared to the problems encountered in working large quantities of topdressing sand into the aerification holes. Typically, one cubic yard or more of topdressing material per 1,000 square feet is being applied, and a variety of dragging, brushing, and matting operations are used to work the topdressing into the aerification holes. In one instance, high-pressure water hoses were used to wash the topdressing into the surface. These methods eventually move the material into the aerification holes, but they are time consuming and labor intensive.

My first turf tip for this year involves a better way of working in heavy topdressing applications following deep aerification. At Martin Downs Country Club, near Stuart, Florida, golf course superintendent David Oliver and his staff have been on a deep-aerification program for several years. After trying several different dragging arrangements, it was found that a simple board float made of two-by-fours was a very effective and efficient means of moving

a large quantity of topdressing material into the deep-tine aerification holes. The board float is pulled with a utility vehicle and a standard drag brush is attached behind the float. A couple of bags of cement mix mounted on the sides of the float help maintain maximum performance. The next time you want to incorporate a large amount of topdressing into a green, give this setup a try.

At last year's conference, Jim Latham discussed a method of rolling putting greens to temporarily increase their speed and surface firmness. Though I have a few reservations about rolling greens, there has been an increase in the use of this management technique. During my travels in 1990, I observed a couple of different rolling methods. At The Plantation at Ponte Vedra, outside of Jacksonville, Florida, bentgrass greens are being maintained. To help compensate for slower greens speeds when the bentgrass is cut at higher mowing heights during periods of stress, the greens are rolled for special events. Rolling is done with a unit