

# TURF TWISTERS

---

## DURING THE WINTER

**Question:** During the winter, many sprinkler heads on my golf course become lifted out of the ground due to frost heaving. It seems to be the same ones each year. I have tried back-filling around the head with sand, but that hasn't helped. Do you have any alternatives? (Maine)

**Answer:** Try covering each sprinkler head with one or two bales of hay. The hay helps insulate the soil and prevents heaving.

## WORN HOLES

**Question:** I get a lot of pressure from our winter golfers (especially on weekends) to start play before the frost is off the greens. As if that isn't enough, I'm not allowed to establish temporary greens, and by spring the greens are very worn around the holes and are often rough and slow to recover. What can I do to get the golfers on the course more quickly in the morning, and what kind of measures can be taken to prevent the area around the holes from becoming worn from winter play? (Wisconsin)

**Answer:** Short of buying them a ticket to Florida, consider using geotextile covers for the first four or five greens (and perhaps a few shaded greens). By putting the covers on the evening before a heavy frost is predicted, you can prevent the frost from setting up on the greens. By the time the players get around to number five, the frost will probably have melted on the remaining greens.

As far as protecting the turfgrass itself, take a lesson from the folks out west. The greens are topdressed rather heavily *after* snowmold-preventing fungicides are applied in the late fall. To some degree, this provides protection to the crown or growing point of the turfgrass plant. At the Laurel Country Club (Laurel, Montana), no play is permitted when the putting surfaces are softened by a thaw, to prevent footprinting and damage to the turf. Their unique "kicker" is banning the use of spiked shoes for winter play. Wear around the holes is practically non-existent. Winter watering on warm days (over 32° F) also helps minimize desiccation during snowless periods.

## NEED RELIEF

**Question:** After changing cup positions on the greens, scalping damage sometimes occurs on the plugs used to fill the previous day's hole. Scalping is particularly troublesome when the plugs swell after we irrigate the greens. To prevent this type of injury, I have instructed my employees to place the plugs slightly below the putting surface. This solution creates another problem, however, as the members insist they cannot gain relief. Is this true? (Arizona)

**Answer:** Yes. Rule 16-1c applies.