

TURF TWISTERS

OPINIONS

Question: Everyone who plays our golf course seems to have a different opinion on which sand is best for the bunkers. Is there a “best” sand? (Illinois)

Answer: In a word — no. Bunker sand selection is one of the most subjective decisions made on any course. From a size standpoint, use the USGA’s guidelines for sands used in the rootzone of a green for a starting point. Since the sand will be thrown onto the green during play, be certain the bunker sand is not finer than that used in the construction of the green. Also, keep the percentage of particles above two millimeters to a minimum, since they are too small to pick up by hand but just the right size to dull a mower. Hopefully, you can find two or more sands that meet these criteria. If so, the next step is most important. Construct a practice bunker with partitions for each type of sand. Let your players practice from the various sands for at least a month so they can get a feel for what they like best. A good sand may seem a bit fluffy at first, but will settle down in several weeks or months.

REGARDING NEW BENTGRASSES

Question: With all the new bentgrasses on the market, how do we decide which is best for our course? (Texas)

Answer: There are a number of steps that should be taken — and the Green Section can help you with each. First, contact your regional Green Section office and speak with the agronomists. They see virtually everything on the market and will gladly share their experiences. They can also put you in touch with the nearest university that conducts turfgrass trials so you can arrange for a visit to see the grasses in the research environment. The next step is to visit courses that have already planted the new bentgrasses and evaluate the greens in action. Once again, the Green Section can help you identify the courses and which grass they have planted. The ultimate test (and one every club should employ before replanting to a large extent) is to establish your own nursery with the grasses you are considering so you can see how they perform on your site.

CREATES A RUNNING DEBATE

Question: Our golf committee has had a running debate on the proper positioning of bunker rakes. Is there a rule? If not, what is the USGA’s policy on the subject? (Maine)

Answer: Just remember “down and out.” There is no specific rule regarding placement of bunker rakes; however, for the USGA’s championships we request that bunker rakes be placed outside of the bunker, lying down (not stuck in the turf vertically), and parallel to the direction of play. In most cases, this arrangement has the least objectionable impact on play. However, for regular play, the best placement is the one that the majority of golfers prefer.