

THE BEST TURF TIPS OF 1997

One of the most popular annual features of the Education Conference is the Best Turf Tips. This year, 10 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 1996. The Turf Tips appear throughout this issue.

SAY HELLO AND TEACH

A new idea to help golfers learn how to repair ball marks.

by PATRICK M. O'BRIEN

BALL MARK REPAIR is one of the tasks a golfer can carry out to really help a golf course superintendent protect the appearance and playability of the course. But even with the annual anti-ball-mark campaign carried out by many golf courses, golfers often forget to make the repair. This damage is easy to fix and takes very little time to do, but superintendents constantly look for ways to influence golfers to carry out this chore. Unfortunately, even those golfers who do take the time to repair ball marks often do not do it correctly, and incorrect repair can delay healing just as long as neglect does.

The concept of repairing a ball mark is not easy to understand just by looking at line illustrations and color pictures, but a golf course superintendent in the Atlanta, Georgia, area may have come up with an idea that does a better job of teaching golfers how to do this task.

Ouch!

The impact of a descending golf ball as it hits a putting green is a violent process. According to Frank Thomas, USGA Technical Director, "The speed of the golf ball is approximately 60 to

70 mph as it approaches the putting surface." The golf ball is also spinning at the same time, causing not only a depression from the high speed of impact, but tearing the turf as well. "It is a type of wear injury," says Dr. Bob Carrow of the University of Georgia. From an agronomic viewpoint, the weight and speed of the golf ball results in damage to the turfgrass leaves, crown, and roots. The leaf tissue receives the greatest injury from the impact and the shearing effects of the ball spinning. Other plant damage occurs to the crown and roots behind the ball from displacement during impact.

Recovery depends on several factors, including the turfgrass variety, season of the year, irrigation and fertilization practices, and amount of thatch. Under ideal conditions, it usually takes 7 to 14 days for a ball mark to recover, if correctly repaired. It takes twice as long if improperly repaired. New leaf growth usually originates from surrounding crown tissue adjacent to the injury. For example, bentgrass in the late summer will recover more slowly due to the shallower and finer roots that are more susceptible to tearing injury. On the other hand, bermuda-

grass will recover more quickly in the late summer, with its stronger roots and more active growth.

The Mark Hoban Method

Mark Hoban, certified golf course superintendent at The Standard Club, Duluth, Georgia, has come up with a new idea to help golfers learn how to fix a ball mark correctly. Each spring, Mark selects a major golf event at the club and stands behind his favorite green. After each group has completed the hole, Mark introduces himself and demonstrates the proper technique for repairing a ball mark. Mark also answers any questions about the procedure. After the demonstration, Mark gives each golfer a repair tool as a keepsake.

Golfers Remember Mark

During the rest of the golf season, Mark receives many benefits from this spring communication event. Everyone knows that Mark is the superintendent, and they ask him to demonstrate to guests how to repair ball marks throughout the year. The members also understand that Mark's putting green maintenance objective to keep the green surface dry and firm helps to reduce ball marks.

Ball marks are one of those "under everyone's nose but too close to see" issues that isn't addressed enough. The active role taken by Mark Hoban has helped alert his membership about how they can assist their golf course superintendent with ball mark repair. At The Standard Club, more golfers are repairing ball marks the correct way. It's amazing what a little teaching time and communication can accomplish.

Giving golfers a free repair tool will encourage players to fix ball marks.



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