

Is It Really GUR (Ground Under Repair)?

How you answer this question will impact course maintenance, playability, and public relations.

by BOB BRAME



Excessive white paint, to mark Ground Under Repair, can reflect negatively on a maintenance program. Avoid marking areas that can and should be defined under Local Rules, such as gravel-filled drainage lines. If it is Ground Under Repair, then repair it as quickly as possible.

WE ALL HAVE pet peeves that bring quick and pointed responses. I confess the excessive marking of Ground Under Repair (GUR), which occurs all too often, is one of mine. Too much white paint alters the play of the game we all love, while communicating a less than positive message to golfers about course conditioning.

This Turf Tip was inspired by the 1996 Senior Open Championship at Canterbury Golf Club in Cleveland, Ohio. Unfortunately, several hydraulic leaks occurred on various pieces of equipment. Although grass killed by hydraulic oil does not look very pretty, it does not necessarily alter fair play. This point is especially true on closely cut surfaces like greens, tees, and fairways. A similar argument can be made for dormant bermuda or zoysiagrass — although they may not be green during the winter months, playability is just fine. The absence of green color is not

the standard for marking GUR. In fact, the lack of grass does not always call for white paint.

During the 1996 Senior Open, a hydraulic leak killed some grass on a fairway and on into the adjacent rough. The leak occurred while the mower was on the fairway. When the operator noticed the problem, the unit was immediately driven into the rough. The incident happened during a practice round, just before championship play started.

The damaged turf in the rough was marked as GUR, while the fairway kill was left for normal play. The hydraulic oil kill on the higher mowed (4-5") rough resulted in quick deterioration of the playing surface both in and immediately around the damaged turf. A player whose ball comes to rest on the damaged grass and yet up against the healthy tall rough surrounding it, would have an unfair penalty. Conversely, the closely cut ($\frac{1}{16}$ ") fairway

would not produce any real difference in playing surface where the grass had died vs. the surrounding healthy turf. (As the injured turf deteriorates and decays, it may eventually become necessary to mark the area on the fairway.)

Similar situations have occurred on greens. Hydraulic oil damage to greens causes very little impact on playability, at least during the first few days after the mishap. Sodding or plugging would, in most cases, require marking as GUR. A brown putting surface does not necessarily call for white paint.

It is important to remember that consistency is the key to marking GUR. All similar irregularities should be treated the same. It is a good idea to tour the entire course before bringing out the white paint. This procedure helps eliminate the possibility of treating similar conditions in different ways. When in doubt, it is much better to miss on the *no-paint* end of the continuum. Consistency is the key to fairness.

Communication is vitally important in golf course conditioning. The excessive marking of GUR can communicate poor maintenance practices. A recognition of the power in unspoken communication should combine with fairness and consistency to guide the marking of GUR. If it is truly GUR, then repair it as quickly as possible.

The rules governing the game of golf have their origin in two basic concepts. They are: (1) Play the course the way you find it, and (2) play the ball where it lies. Yes, there are times when, in the interest of fairness, portions of the course should be marked as GUR. However, all too often the marking of GUR is excessive. Think about it! Is it really Ground Under Repair?

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