

# Turf Twisters

**Q:** After years of 7:30 a.m. tee times seven days a week, the golf course superintendent and Green Committee are requesting a policy change. In addition to making 8:00 a.m. the first tee time, the course will be closed one half day each week for maintenance. Accommodating member play during the winter season is already difficult because of the reduced day



length during this time. Is limiting play further during the prime season really necessary, and will we see any real benefit as far as better course conditioning? (Florida)

**A:** Yes and yes. The accepted standards for putting greens and overall course quality have risen dramatically over the past 10 to 15 years. To provide putting green conditioning in keeping with current expectations, ongoing adherence to good basic management programs is necessary. Having an extra 30 minutes each morning and being able to stay ahead of play provide improved

efficiency and effectiveness with routine mowing and other practices. Proper timing of practices and treatments also is critical for producing the desired outcomes. If consistent and good quality conditions are desired, golfers must understand and accept that allowing time for maintenance is a necessity, not a luxury.

**Q:** We have a small practice range tee that gets wiped out with divots in a very short period of time. Do you have any tips to help the grass grow back faster? We're already fertilizing every week and hand watering daily. (Nevada)

**A:** Extra water and fertilizer will help, but it is not the complete answer. Given the fact that you have a small tee area, it would help to focus on ways to use the surface area more efficiently, which would allow more time for turf recovery. Here are a few suggestions:

- Begin referring to your practice range as the "warm-up area," which implies that golfers should only be there for a short time before their round and not hang around for an extended practice session.
- Avoid the practice of providing unlimited practice balls. Golfers tend to hit as many balls as they can until the pile is gone, leaving hundreds of divots in their wake. Instead, offer golf balls in small canvas bags, which hold about 25-30 balls.
- Encourage golfers to concentrate the divot pattern so that the tee stations can be

moved laterally the next day. The maintenance department or pro shop staff should follow a very specific plan for rotating tee stations so you can maximize the use of the total area.

- Consider installing a row of artificial turf mats at the rear of the tee area that can be used one or two days per week.
- If the tee surface gets completely inundated with divots every year, there may be no alternative but to replace the sod as part of your annual maintenance schedule.

