

Turf Twisters

Q: We have a golf course that gets so wet during the winter months that we cannot even get mowers out to cut the roughs for several weeks. We cannot afford the amount of sand topdressing and drainage needed to make the roughs mowable, so do you have any other ideas? (Washington)



A: Scott Stambaugh, superintendent of Overlake G&CC, has found a perfect answer to your question. He found that lightweight power bunker rakes can operate virtually anywhere without leaving tire marks. His mechanic then built a lightweight towbar that tows

three lightweight homeowner lawn mowers to create his own triplex rough mowing unit. Mr. Stambaugh now reports that nine holes can be mowed daily using his “wet set” of mowers regardless of how wet the roughs (or fairways) may become.

Q: Our club uses temporary tees during the winter months. Surrounding clubs continue to use their regular tees for winter play. Is there a general recommendation for closing tees during the winter? (Maryland)

A: No. If your regular tees are used, they will likely show signs of damage through the winter and into spring. Temporary tees help to limit damage to regular tees during a time of the year when the grass is not

recovering. However, many golfers grumble about temporary winter tees. If the regular tees are to be used when the grass is not growing, there needs to be an understanding that areas of the tees will still show

signs of damage during the early part of the golfing season until the grass begins to grow enough to provide recovery or until these areas are sodded if damage is severe.

Q: We are required to stay on cart paths at times during the winter play season. Do carts really have a major impact on our turf?

A: Yes, especially during the winter play season. Bermudagrass is a warm-season turfgrass and its growth decreases as soil temperatures drop below 65°F. The winter play season often exceeds 200 rounds per day for several

months. When such conditions occur on semi-dormant grass, it can cause significant thinning. This can be easily seen by comparing par-3 holes, where cart traffic is limited, to other holes throughout the golf course. Utilizing ropes and stakes or a rotating *resting hole* program are unpopular with many golfers but can significantly improve turfgrass quality.

