

CHIPS & PUTTS

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Bethlehem Golf Club

Tom Wilchak, Superintendent

April marks the start of our golf season and our annual trip to the Lehigh Valley looking for warmer weather. Tom Wilchak will host the Pocono Turfgrass Association at this popular club.

Tom has been at Bethlehem Golf Club for 16 years and is now the General Manager and Superintendent for the course. Prior to Bethlehem Golf Club, Tom worked at Kennett Square Country Club and at Fiddlers Elbow in New Jersey.

William and Dan Gordon were the architects of the 7,017 yard course. The golf course is a Par 71 layout with a slope of 73.6 and a course rating of 127. In addition to the 18 hole regulation course, there is an executive 9 hole course on the other side of the road as well

as a practice area. The practice area recently underwent some improvements, including a covered hitting area. Other improvements at the club during 2009 included the installation of a Rainbird decoder system to control both courses and a new cart barn.

Tom manages a staff of 40 in the summer and has a full time winter crew of 12. The staff maintains 200 acres that encompass both golf courses and the practice area. The courses have 4 acres of greens, 4 acres of tees, and 35 acres of fairways. There are 100 acres of rough.

Rick Fletcher of the Cleary Chemical Company is scheduled to give a talk on using chemistry properly. The talk will cover tank mixing, identification of pests, proper calibration, and disease management strategies. GCSAA credits and PA DEP credits are available for those who attend. Rick is scheduled to speak before dinner; so even if you can't sneak away for the whole day, please make an effort to get out and network before the season really kicks in.

Atlantic Irrigation has agreed to sponsor the meeting. Thank you very much to Ken Givens and Mike Yarusi for their generosity.

We will have a blind draw two man tournament which will be a 6 hole scramble, 6 hole better ball and 6 hole alternate shot format. This year the Golf Committee has made a great attempt to vary the format, looking to strengthen the networking opportunities for attendees. The PTGA is also looking to enforce the registration deadlines, so please get them in on time. The Golf Committee is very lenient on cancellations, so if you think you are coming, go ahead and register early. If the need arises, cancel your registration.

Just an FYI fact, the Gordons have also done work at Saucon Valley-Grace Course, Mahoning Valley, Edgewood in the Pines, Frosty Valley, and Whitford CC; the Gordons have also done renovation work at Brookside CC, Buck Hill CC, Manufacturers' CC, Saucon Valley-Old Course, and Lehigh County Club, to name a few. Anyway, enjoy the spring and get your clubs ready for some fun.



President's Message.....

Just a few short weeks ago I had 17" of snow on the ground. Now it's pushing 89 degrees. The flowers are blooming, trees are already starting to leaf out and the spring peepers are at full crescendo. Half of my course is under water, while the other half is screaming for a drink. It really is April, right ?

The Board has come up with some fantastic meeting sites and interesting games to play. I encourage you to make as many meetings as you can. This year should prove to be fun for everyone. Our Education Committee has been hard at work securing some great speakers for your pleasure. I personally enjoy seeing new and old faces alike, and hearing how everyone's year is shaping up.

So in closing, May is on it's way and we should brace ourselves for whatever Mother Nature is going to throw at us. Good luck, and keep it out of the deep stuff.

Rick Anglemyer

Editor's Notes.....

Well, spring is here, and the temps have already broken the 80's, which is amazing after the tough ending to the winter. Winter injury has reared its ugly head again this year on some properties, showing how widely different our area is. We are heading down to the Lehigh Valley in April to enjoy the warmer weather at Bethlehem Golf Club, and I know Tom will have the place ready for us.

The economy seems to be getting a little stronger. Hopefully, budgets will have seen the last of the cuts. Remember that meetings are a great place to enjoy time with others who do the same thing you do and can share war stories, successes and failures, so that everyone may grow stronger. The Education Committee is making a strong attempt at getting DEP and GCSAA education points for each meeting, except the clambake, so the meeting will be a valuable addition to your education opportunities this year. Make it a point to get to a meeting this year.

Matt Brown is heading up the Golf Committee this season. Let him know what you think. Matt and the rest of the BOD are here to steer the Association as the members desire. Make your voices heard to Board member with any questions, concerns, or applause.

Anyway, enjoy the spring, because summer isn't far off.

Jim Gurzler



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When It Comes to Topdressing Fairways: More is Better

Preliminary data from a two year University of Connecticut field study shows that application rate has a greater impact than sand particle size distribution in meeting fairway topdressing objectives.

By Jim Skorulski, Dr. Jason Henderson and Nathaniel A. Miller

For years, golf course superintendents in the Pacific Northwest have benefited from sand topdressing on wet and poorly drained fairway and rough areas. The sand applications, over time, firmed the wet surfaces for improved maintenance and playability. Other benefits observed from topdressing included a reduction in earthworm castings, improved rooting, earlier spring green-up, and a possible reduction in water use. Golf courses across North America have turned to fairway topdressing in hopes of achieving similar benefits. But, as the program gains in popularity, there remain some unanswered questions, such as what are the effects of sand type and application rates on the success of the program?

An ongoing field study funded by the USGA Grant-in-Aide Research Program and Tri-State Research Corporation at the University of Connecticut (UCONN) is starting to shed some light on the impact of sand type and application volumes on soil physical properties, turfgrass quality, earthworm castings, and turf disease. The project is being completed by Dr. Jason Henderson and Nathaniel Miller on creeping bentgrass fairway plots at the UCONN Plant Science Education and Research Facility in Storrs, CT. The objectives of the experiment were to: 1) determine whether particle size distribution and/or application rate will affect color, turfgrass quality, turfgrass cover, disease incidence and earthworm activity; 2) quantify the effects of particle size distribution and topdressing layer depth on moisture retention, soil temperature, and resistance to surface displacement (firmness); 3) use resultant data to make recommendations to improve the practice of fairway topdressing.

The experiment was initiated in July of 2007 when the initial sand treatments were applied. Sand treatments were applied on a monthly schedule through November of 2007. Treatments were reinitiated in May of 2008 and continued monthly through November of 2008. Coarse, medium, and fine-textured sands were included in the experiment with application rates at 4ft³ per 1,000 ft², 8 ft³ per 1,000 ft² and 12 ft³ per 1,000

over the native sandy loam soils. A control plot that received no topdressing applications also was included. The plots were rated for turf quality and color. Percent cover was determined, along with soil moisture content, firmness, and temperature. Dollar spot incidence and earthworm castings also were measured as they occurred. The data were collected weekly through the 2008 growing season and biweekly through the 2009 season. Data from the 2008 season will be discussed, as the 2009 data is currently being collected and analyzed.

Turf Quality, Color and Cover

The data analysis indicates that fairway topdressing positively influences turf quality, color, and cover. The increase in turfgrass quality appeared as an overall rate response, with plots receiving higher rates of topdressing generally getting higher quality ratings despite the type of sand applied. Topdressing rate also had the largest impact on turfgrass color throughout the season, but was most noticeable during initial spring green-up. Plots receiving the most sand had the greatest color response during the 2008 season. Turf cover data were collected just prior to the next topdressing application. Greater turfgrass cover was observed on plots topdressed at higher application rates. Sand type showed no effect on turfgrass cover when the data were collected at the end of the month.

Soil Moisture

Soil moisture content in the top two inches of the root zone profile was impacted by both sand type and application rate. Generally, the coarser the sand, the less water was retained. Similarly, the higher the topdressing application rate, the less water was retained in the upper profile. The only exception to these trends was in September 2008 when moisture levels were very high and both the fine and medium textured sands retained more moisture than the coarse sand and control plots.

Surface Firmness

A primary reason fairway topdressing programs are implemented is to firm the surfaces, improve playability, and minimize course closure following heavy rains. Surface firmness was measured in this study using a proving ring penetrometer. A sand type and application rate effect was observed in April and May.

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An ongoing field study... is starting to shed some light on the impact of sand type and application volumes on soil physical properties, turfgrass quality, earthworm castings and turf disease.



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The rate effect showed that treatments receiving higher rates of topdressing were firmer than the lower rate and control treatments. The rate effect was not significant from June through October. The sand type effect continued into June with the fine sand and USGA sands showing greater firmness than the coarse sand treatments. The sand type effect from July and August showed that the fine and USGA sands were not significantly different from the control. The coarse sand treatment was less firm than the control, fine sand, and USGA sand treatments from July through October.

Earthworm Castings and Dollar Spot Incidence


Sand topdressing did reduce earthworm castings on a measurement date in November 2008. Significant differences were observed based on application rates. The plots receiving the 8 and 12ft³ per 1,000 ft² had significantly lower earthworm castings than plots receiving the low application rate and the control. Plots receiving the low application rate of 4ft³ per 1,000 ft² had significantly lower castings than the control.

Significant differences in dollar spot incidence were recorded on the plots in October 2007 and June 2008.

The severity of the infection was reduced by sand topdressing. The highest application rate of 12 ft³ per 1,000 ft² had significantly lower dollar spot counts than plots receiving the low and medium application rates and the control.

The results of this short two-year field study are preliminary, but none-the-less are encouraging and support the benefits of fairway topdressing programs. Fairway topdressing is not for every golf course. It requires a long term commitment and investment that, over time, can improve playing conditions. Dr. Henderson sums up the initial finding well in the following quote, "The good news is that the majority of responses appear to be related to application rate rather than sand type, which could result in a significant cost savings associated with sand purchases." Additional information regarding this study can be found at <http://www.turf.uconn.edu> and <http://usgatero.msu.edu/>.

Jim Skorulski is a senior agronomist for the Green Section's Northeast Region; Jason Henderson, Ph.D., assistant professor, turfgrass and soil sciences, and Nathaniel Miller, M.S. candidate, department of plant science, University of Connecticut.



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Preventative shouldn't just be for Disease Management

By Jeff Allen, Atlantic Irrigation

Just because it's cool outside doesn't mean you can't spend some time prepping your irrigation control system for the upcoming Season. Here are a few suggestions for things you can do during the off season to make sure your irrigation system is ready to go in spring.

The Computer

In the middle of the Summer the Irrigation Central computer can become one of the single most important pieces of equipment at your facility and yet it is amazing how poorly treated they can be. In some cases Weed eaters get better attention. Now is the perfect time to take your Irrigation Central to either the Clubs IT person or to a professional and have it thoroughly cleaned. Do not do what I did a few years ago and use the shop's air compressor to blow out a dirty PC. The tower had never been cleaner but now needed a new motherboard because of the condensation in the compressor. Back up the data base- nothing is worse than realizing on a hot Saturday morning when you lose you computer to a surge or something that you have no back up. Put a copy on a thumb drive or a CD, and put it in a safe place. Get in the habit of doing this a couple times a year to make sure you have the most current data base. Go through the data base and make sure that the changes that have been done out in the field have been programmed in the computer. Are the nozzles correct, are the arcs of the sprinklers correctly programmed, is the hydraulic tree correct? Do you have areas where due to piping restrictions you have poorly performing heads that could be limited by adjusting the flo manager? Winter is the perfect time to make all these tweaks you don't get to do during the season.

Do you have a UPS battery backup device protecting the computers power supply? These units protect the computer by maintaining the voltage during spikes and brown outs, they also provide a limited amount of running time during power outages. The UPS operates off a rechargeable battery that, depending upon the size, gives you a limited amount of time to safely shut-down the system. Another positive step would be installing a primary surge protector on the electric circuit that the computer is on. This unit gets wired in at the

breaker and provides another layer of protection your valuable central equipment.

Ground

A Ground is conducting connection between an electrical circuit and the earth or other large conducting body to serve as an earth thus making a complete electrical circuit.

Grounding is such an important ingredient of an irrigation system, but is often taken for granted. The only situation where grounding is not important is in a manual quick coupler system. Two wire, decoder, wireless, all require proper grounding. Please refer to the manufacturer's recommendations for the exact specs. To

begin, all grounds need to be tested and those results (resistance to ground) need to be documented. This testing needs to be done twice a year. This test will measure the ability of that ground to accept a surge, either lightning or power and pass it harmlessly to an earth ground. If that energy cannot follow the path of least inductance then it will expend itself inside the controller. This test is done by using a megger, the traditional three point meter, or a clamp on meter. Either style will give you an accurate reading.

Here are specific locations where the grounding needs to be checked.

The Irrigation Central computer needs to be grounded to the Irrigation interface so they both maintain the same potential. Typically this is nothing more than attaching a #6 copper wire to the Computer's metal chassis and the ground connection on the interface. Also of importance is making sure the irrigation interface is also grounded to earth. What is the interface grounded to? Typically all hard wired control systems are wired back to the central and pass through a surge protection device and lead to the field Interface. Are the leads connecting the interface (MIMI, FIU) to the ground outside clean and tight? Is the ground grid that handles the interface and wire paths coming back to the shop accessible? The wire coming from the interface connecting to the ground rod needs good metal to metal contact. This is an ideal place to start in examining those connections. If they are mechanical (connected with a bolt or nut) they need to be taken apart, cleaned and put back together. An alternate solution to having to check

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those connections regularly would be to exothermically weld (ie Cadweld) that connection insuring a permanent positive contact. This holds true with all grounding connections.

Does the interface support multiple wire paths? Are they all working? Now is the right time to diagnose and make sure everything gets repaired before the season gets underway

Field Splices- Take the time to mark or label valve boxes as to what they contain. Make it as easy as possible to identify what those boxes contain. Being able to drive up and see what exactly is in the ground will not only help you but also Staff who may not know the system all that well.

Controllers

Take a leaf blower and blow all the debris, dirt, dust, spider webs, and mouse nests out of the box. In locations where there is a chronic mouse problem it will pay to bring in the faceplates and cables. Turn off the power, do anything you can to make it a less inviting environment for them. Going back on a regular basis to inspect and blow out the boxes may help as well as leaving poison baits and traps.

Look in the controller and find where the bare copper ground wire attaches to the controller chassis. Loosen it, take it off and clean off the wire and connection point so that there is good metal to metal contact. This will insure a good clean connection for the ground wire. Quite often the last time these get inspected is when the controller is installed. This should really be done twice a year. Making sure the connection is clean should be a annual, if not bi annual event. On the other end of the bare copper wire leaving the controller ground lugs should be some combination of a ground-

ing grid that typically includes copper clad ground rods and plates. To measure the effectiveness of this ground grid have the resistance tested with either a Megger or clamp on meter.

Again, look at the way the ground wire is attached to the rod. Ideally the rod has a grate covering a sleeve over the top of the rod to allow inspection and moisture to reach the rod. If the rod has a clamp or mechanical connection, again remove thoroughly clean and reattach the connection or use a exothermic type of connection.

This article just skims the surface of some very involved topics and is meant to make the reader aware of a few basic preventative maintenance steps that need be done on a regular basis. Accomplishing these tasks in the off season will give you some peace of mind when you entire the growing season and may help prevent some catastrophic event from happening. The few basic steps previously mentioned are by no means any guarantee of preventing or eliminating surge related damage but are just merely suggestions as ways to prevent it. The simple steps covered above can be easily done in house while the system is winterized. There are other significant parts of your irrigation system that need to be inspected and maintained on a regular basis, such as sprinkler head rotation and proper operation, as well as to perform regular maintenance on your pump station. Also, take advantage of your friendly Irrigation Salesperson. They are there to help you be as successful as possible and can be a great source of information. And who knows, they may even have something you would want to buy.

Jeff Allen is golf sales for central and southern New Jersey with Atlantic Irrigation.

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POCONO ROUNDUP

Best Wishes

Best Wishes go out to our April Meeting host Tom Wilchak of the Bethlehem Golf Club. Tom underwent back surgery in early April.

New Ownership

Mahoning Valley CC in Lehighton PA has new ownership. The Lehigh Gas Company has purchased the club and retained Jeremy Jones as Director of Operations for the facility. The club was founded in 1927 by Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company and was private until 2005, when it was purchased by Oliver Angelus, who had purchased the club in 2005.

Welcome

Welcome to Kevin Taggart, Superintendent at River-view Golf Course in Easton PA. Kevin is the brother of Steve Taggart at Shawnee Inn and Resort. Welcome Kevin.

PTGA SCHEDULE

| | |
|----------|---|
| April 19 | Bethlehem Golf Club Host Tom Wilchak |
| May 26 | Pocono Manor Host Cory Preis |
| June 21 | Stone Hedge Host |
| July 19 | Glenbrook CC Host Jeff Feick |
| Aug 16 | Elmhurst CC Host Ray Waddell |
| Sept 20 | Pine Hills CC Host Eric Duffy |
| Oct 7 | Valley CC Host Eric Reed, CGCS |



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