

The USGA Green Section Record



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All Things Considered - A Green Section Staff Opinion

A "New" Normal For Golf Course Maintenance

Given a soft economy, recent adjustments may not necessarily be temporary.

by [Ty McClellan](#), agronomist, Mid-Continent Region



We'll get back to (insert any maintenance practice or budget line item cut in recent years) as soon as things return to normal." Sound familiar? At face value, this comment suggests that, while the business of golf is down, the situation is only temporary and operations and staffing levels will return to normal. So, what exactly is normal? For many, normal is the general state of golf that existed prior to 2008.

The 1990s and early 2000s can certainly be referred to as the good ol' days when golf was bursting at the seams with optimism in every sense of the word. There were an increasing number of golfers, new course construction, and strong revenue streams at golf facilities of all types. Positions for superintendents and assistants were being created faster than turf students could finish their education. In an atmosphere of pure optimism, golf courses were also being designed for the best of times and maintained to achieve the wow factor. This meant extravagance at many levels, including more bunkers with high faces, more tees, more yardage, and more acres of manicured turf. None of this came cheap, and courses became more expensive to maintain with unsustainable business models. [Read the rest of this article.](#)

Environmental Common Sense - A Sample In-House Audit

Some simple steps are all you need to start

by [James F. Moore](#), director



The safe storage of fuel is an area many courses need to address and fortunately, can be accomplished with pre-packaged units like this one.

It is the superintendent's responsibility to make his or her employers aware of environmental problems that exist on the property. Although they probably have raised the subject at meetings and indicated a need for the organization to take action, many superintendents have not taken the step of completing an in-house environmental audit for their employers. The purpose of this article is to give the superintendent a starting point for accomplishing such an audit. Following is a sample report to the leadership of a fictitious course. This report provides a good format that can be customized to meet the needs of your course.

To: The Green Committee
From: John Smith, Golf Course Superintendent
Date: 1/28/2011

The following report has been prepared for the Committee to provide information about the environmental aspects of our golf course operations. Many aspects of course management that have environmental ramifications are detailed in this report, including our current state of affairs and options for improvement. This report is an in-house effort for the sole use of the Committee.

There are six major areas in which our course operations have the potential to impact the environment:

- Fuel Storage
- Pesticide and Fertilizer Storage
- Equipment Washing and Pesticide Mixing Area
- Water Use
- Pesticide and Fertilizer Use

- Wildlife Habitat

[Read the rest of this sample report.](#)

Advice To Players - May 21, 1923

From the Bulletin of the Green Section of the U.S. Golf Association

Advice to Players

The author of "The Golfer's Rain Jacket" is evidently a golfer (*ed. note: this is apparently a reference to another article or publication of the time*). There is much feeling embodied in his set of "Don'ts'." We pass along his advice.

"Don't move, talk, whistle, cough, sneeze, groan, grunt or even think out loud while a stroke is being played. "Don't stand close to, in front of, behind or cast shadows across the player's line-while he is addressing a 'putt.' If the ball 'rims' the cup it then becomes your duty to restrain the player from any acts of violence.

"Don't play from a tee until the party in front have all played their second strokes, replaced their divots, relighted their pipes, concluded their golf stories, collected their caddies, selected their next clubs and are well out of range .

"Don't play up to a putting green until the party in front have all holed out, practiced their missed putts, replaced the flag, fixed up the score cards, exchanged the putters for drivers and all players and caddies are off the green.



"Don't be vexed if the players in front can't find their lost ball. Should they, eventually, signal you to 'play through' (and then play along with you), show your appreciation by giving each of them a cigar. The 'Flor de Killdead' is made for this purpose, and is sold by all fireworks stores.

"Don't fail to fill up and to smooth over neatly all footprints in the bunker sand. If you carry in your bag a small garden rake, a bricklayer's trowel and a wire broom, the operation will require only about half an hour.

"Don't neglect immediately and properly to replace the turf. A small sprinkling can, a canteen of water, an ordinary rolling pin, a package of grass seeds and one pound of 'dehydrated ostrich manure, added to your equipment, will reduce this obligation to a mere pleasure!"

It's That Time Of Year!



A Mid-Atlantic Regional Update

by [Keith Happ](#), senior agronomist



Drainage and tree work are always high on the list of winter projects

It's that time of year when we get glimpses of sun, blue sky, and warmer air. In this region, winter has set-in, with most areas experiencing colder and snowier conditions than usual. Even though golf is on television, we won't have consistent golf weather conditions for awhile. We often experience thaws in January and February, but no matter how much we wish for a rapid return to spring weather, we are still in the heart of winter.

This time of year can be very productive. Take the time to walk the course and observe sunlight and drainage patterns. When freeze and thaw cycles occur, track the water movement so drainage placement intercepts can be most productive. If the grass is exposed, look at the above- and below-ground plant structures. Take a sample indoors and thaw it out to monitor the condition of the grass. Cool-season grass should exhibit green/white crowns, with new white adventitious roots. Warm-season grass should have white rhizomes that snap when they are broken. While we still have a lot of winter weather ahead, it is not too early to take a walk and check on plant health.

Drainage and tree work are always high on the list of winter projects. [Read the rest of this update.](#)

The State of the Northeast Region Halfway Through Winter



A Northeast Regional Update

by [Adam Moeller](#), agronomist

Winter injury on *Poa annua* greens can develop from a number of causes, which is why the winter season creates feelings of uncertainty for so many in the Northeast. Creeping bentgrass greens, however, are much more tolerant of winter weather than *Poa annua*, so the amount of concern is significantly lower for courses that have creeping bentgrass.

At this point, most of the Northeast is blanketed with a decent snow pack. Some locations, however, have experienced a snow/rain mix that has left portions of golf courses covered with ice. In this situation, some turf managers will remove ice from *Poa annua* greens, while others are content with letting nature take its course. The frustrating fact is



Ice covered *Poa annua* greens can be severely injured if anoxic conditions occur. *Poa annua* greens also lose cold temperature hardiness when they are ice-covered for several weeks, which can increase the potential for direct low temperature injury if an insulating layer (e.g. snow pack, cover system) is not in place.

that turf injury can occur regardless of the decision made. Ice remaining on *Poa annua* greens for an extended period can cause anoxic conditions (low levels of oxygen), which can be lethal to turf. A freeze/thaw cycle on ice-covered *Poa annua* greens in late winter/early spring can cause severe injury, which is why many turf managers choose to remove the ice. On the other hand, ice removed during very low temperatures can be lethal as well, just adding to the difficult decision of ice removal from *Poa annua* greens. [Read the rest of this update, which includes links to other articles on this subject.](#)

Turf Twisters

Where should the permanent tee markers be placed?

by the Green Section staff

Q: *We have added several new tees to our golf course and are due to have the entire course re-rated for handicap purposes. In the past, we have placed our markers at the very back of our championship tees for rating. Is this the best placement for these markers? (Pennsylvania)*

A: *The placement of tee markers at the very back of the championship tees is done for one reason - to inflate the total length of the golf course. The better option may be to place the markers at least three yards forward from the back of the tee to get a true measure of the length that the golf course will play from the championship tees. There should be at least two club lengths between the permanent marker and the back of the tee so that the rating is accurate when tee markers are placed.*

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