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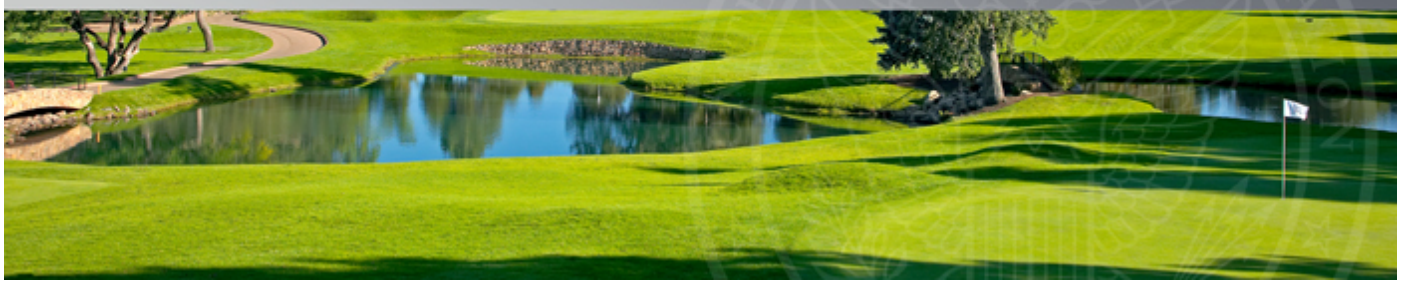

July 1, 2011 -- Volume 49, Number 26

The Fescue Of Your Dreams

If you want it wispy...it must be crispy

by Bob Vavrek, USGA Green Section

The perfect rough?

How would you describe the perfect natural rough? For many golfers, the romanticized version would be a sparse stand of golden brown fescue, about knee-high, crowned by slender seedheads that yield and ripple like ocean waves against the gentle breeze. Furthermore, when an errant shot finds this ideal rough, you find your ball without too much difficulty and with a little luck, have a decent chance of advancing the ball toward the green. Worst-case scenario is simply a wedge back to the short grass. Never lost, never in jail and never - well, hardly ever - is the ball unplayable. Alas, this perfect rough is quite the oxymoron if you think about it.

Just where would we find this fescue of our fantasy? The avid golfer would probably remember watching a wayward drive into deep rough at Shinnecock Hills Golf Club during U.S. Open television coverage or recollect images of sparse, golden roughs from various venues in the United Kingdom during coverage of the British Open.

Fescue is a catch-all term often used to describe a group of grasses. There are many different types of fescues - sheep's fescue, creeping red fescue, tall fescue, chewings fescue - to name just a few examples. The classic fine fescue rough that most golfers would encounter is most likely composed of some combination of sheep's, chewings and hard fescues.

There is no shortage of fine fescue roughs to be found at courses across the northern United States. In fact, it's likely more of a challenge to find a course built during the past 20 years where the architect has not incorporated unmowed fine fescue into the design. So why are there 10 gnarly, weedy jungles of fescue for every rough of sparse, wispy grass?

Read the rest of this article.

When The Rules Of Golf Collide With Golf Course Maintenance

by James Francis Moore, USGA Green Section

Televised golf features courses that are nearly perfect in every respect. Sure, there are those fortunate folks who play courses in similar condition on a daily basis, but most of us get our golf enjoyment on layouts that are far less pristine and in some ways more challenging. While players at top courses often gripe about the "lack of consistency" in their bunkers, we just want some sand in ours.

Although we all play by the same set of rules, there are numerous rules scenarios that occur far more often on low-budget courses than on those with far greater resources. Just a few examples include rocks in bunkers, hazards that are not defined, and old irrigation ditches.

These situations and many more will be addressed in a series of brief articles. The goal is to help the golfer and the staff at low-budget courses enjoy the game while still abiding by the Rules of Golf.

Scenario #1 - Lateral water hazard not defined.

Figure 1 - This lateral water hazard is unmarked. Is the ball in the hazard or not?

We have all seen the perfectly marked lateral water hazards on television - bright red lines that intersect perfectly straight red stakes that define the exact margin of the hazard. Players can easily select any one of the five options as outlined in Rule 26 -Water Hazards (Including Lateral Water Hazards). http://www.usga.org/Rule-Books/Rules-of-Golf/Rule-26/.

Every course should strive to keep its boundaries and hazards marked at all times, but marking paint and stakes are expensive, and it is a labor-intensive and time-consuming task to mark a course. With a limited staff, the mowing personnel cannot be expected to stop at every stake to remove it and then replace it after mowing. In fact, Rule 33-2 (The Course) specifically states that it is the responsibility of the Committee to define water hazards and lateral water hazards (33-2a). Unfortunately, few low-budget courses have such a committee. As a result, many low-budget courses can mark only once or twice per year for a special event. Otherwise, the players are on their own when it comes to determining whether or not the ball is in the hazard. So, how does the player handle the situation depicted in Figure 1?

Read the rest of this article.

Are Ultradwarf Bermudagrass Cultivars Mutating?

Do the industry rumors that ultradwarf cultivars mutate mean that your putting greens will mutate?

by Dr. J. Earl Elsner

***Editor's note** - This article first ran in the Green Section Record in late 2009. Since that time the problem of "off " types of bermudagrass in bermudagrass putting greens continues to cause concern. This article provides the reader a scientific and practical basis for understanding the possible causes of this problem. Also, if you are a golf course superintendent and managing bermudagrass greens please be sure to **take our Green Section survey** regarding this issue.*

In the late 1990s, ultradwarf bermudagrass cultivars challenged the dominance of Tifdwarf on warm-season golf courses. They are now the cultivars of choice on a majority of southern golf courses. Their green speed, smoothness, and firmness delight golfers. The apparent absence of mutations encourages superintendents. Ultradwarf cultivars are planted on more than 14,000 greens, and it does not appear that the putting greens are developing off-type patches or deteriorating surface quality like Tifdwarf. There are examples of collar encroachment

by Tifway and other cultivars. There are a few situations where plants from previous putting greens have survived and very few situations where contaminants were introduced from production fields or nurseries. Ten years and 14,000 greens with very few contamination issues is a remarkable accomplishment.

However, it has not been uncommon to find apparent mutant off-type plants in ultradwarf production fields. Usually, but not always, these are individual patches that are tennis ball to basketball size. The morphology varies and is similar to typical off-type plants in Tifgreen and Tifdwarf putting greens and production fields. So the question becomes - why do ultradwarf mutations survive in production fields, but not in putting greens? This article considers several questions about mutations in bermudagrass putting green cultivars. Hopefully, it will relieve superintendent concerns that ultradwarf green surfaces will deteriorate like Tifgreen and Tifdwarf.

Read the rest of this article.

Mutations disrupt surface putting quality due to the ensuing contamination.

Survey Of Bermudagrass Greens Contamination Problems

How severe is the problem of "off" types in bermudagrass greens?

by the Green Section Staff

No one has greater insight into the severity of this problem than the golf course superintendents who are managing bermudagrass greens every day. By completing this short survey (5 questions), superintendents can help identify the magnitude of the problem on a industry-wide basis.

An Important Green Section Survey

If you are a golf course superintendent and are currently managing bermudagrass greens, or you have managed bermudagrass greens in the past, please take our survey by clicking the link below.

Bermudagrass Greens Survey (for golf course superintendents only please).

See the survey results

Best Management Practices For Salt-Affected Golf Courses: Why And How?

Salinity - a dominant challenge

by Drs. R.N. Carrow and R.R. Duncan

The simple act of broadly applying irrigation containing saline salts over a golf course triggers a number of long-term challenges. Since irrigation is a routine practice, these challenges are ongoing and cannot be ignored (4, 2). Direct on-site effects of salt constituents are exhibited as a combination of: a) salt-induced drought by total soluble salt

accumulation in the grass rootzone that inhibits water uptake (saline soils); b) sodium-induced deterioration of soil physical properties that limit water movement and aeration in the soil (sodic soils); c) turfgrass nutrient imbalances that are dynamic in nature; and d) plant shoot and root ion toxicities and other potential problem ion interactions.

Salt mobility after application enhances the potential for adverse on-site and off-site ecosystem impacts. Constant movement of salts occurs: vertically upward (capillary action); downward in the soil profile (infiltration, percolation, drainage); and horizontally as gravity-enhanced surface and subsurface transport. Of particular concern is the potential impact of salts on surface and subsurface groundwater, both onsite and offsite.

Read the rest of this article.

Salt accumulation in a green from surface and subsurface runoff from the irrigated rough.

Regional Updates

Florida Region

Thunderstorms likely, chance of rain 50% (at least in Florida)

by Todd Lowe, agronomist

Most meteorologists report rainfall as if it is an inconvenience to the public, but it is like music to the ears of Florida golf course superintendents. Maintenance staffs often hover around televisions or computer screens in the mornings, praying that the projected path of rainfall will move toward their area. Most of Florida has been in a severe drought over the past several months, but summer rains have finally begun and have been a Godsend for golf courses.

The recent rains have brought life to ailing turfgrass and a resumption of turf growth. While most of South Florida will remain under irrigation restrictions for some time, the thunderstorms are transforming the environment as they unload needed water onto parched grounds. Golf courses that have been brown from lack of water are now turning a healthy green hue throughout the region.

Read the rest of this update.

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by the USGA Green Section Staff

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