USGA GREEN SECTION RECORD

VOLUME 52, NUMBER 22 | NOVEMBER 14, 2014

AN AGRONOMIST'S VIEW ON HOW TO READ GREENS

By Brian Whitlark, agronomist, Southwest Region

Golf analysts often comment during weekend telecasts that the greens are getting firmer and faster throughout the day, especially if conditions are dry and windy. Other remarks may refer to the greens breaking toward a particular topographic feature, such as a lake, ocean or valley. Viewers may also hear broadcasters assert that recent rains have slowed the pace of the greens. Other analysts will claim that the grain on the greens grows in the direction of the setting sun, thus the ball roll will tend to break toward the west.

Through experience conducting USGA Green Section Course Consulting Service visits and leading agronomic preparations for USGA amateur and open championships, USGA agronomists have gained a scientific and practical understanding of the often misunderstood characteristics of putting greens. The objective of this article is to share our observations that ultimately may help the everyday golfer read greens with more confidence.

How does green speed, grain and break affect playing conditions? What are the most common misconceptions?

Read More

Putting greens on golf courses built before the modern era of course construction tend to slope with the general lay of the land.

ALL THINGS CONSIDERED - A USGA STAFF OPINION
IS THE WEATHER REALLY THAT BIG OF A DEAL?

By Elliott Dowling, agronomist, Mid-Atlantic Region

Mild summer weather allows superintendents to be more aggressive with surface-management procedures like topdressing, grooming, brushing etc. Each practice promotes improved playing surfaces and ultimately better playing conditions.

Golf courses throughout the Mid-Atlantic Region are enjoying very good turf conditions this season. Most courses are doing so with the same management staff and seasonal team as last season. So why is it that last year, during an extremely hot and wet July, the less-than-perfect turf had to have resulted from mismanagement? Conversely, why are this season's exceptional playing conditions the result of the weather and not an exceptional golf course management team?

It is hard to say how many visits I have conducted this season where the unusually cool temperatures, in conjunction with timely rain events, are receiving the majority of the accolades for golf course conditions. One or two of these discussions didn't seem like a big deal, but the trend grew. I soon realized that most golfers are missing the big picture. The weather always plays a huge part in how golf courses are conditioned. Some days, rain might prevent the turf from being cut. Other days, hot and dry conditions may mean carts are not allowed on the course. Sometimes, the weather is so uncooperative that the name of the game is survival; so playability must take a back seat to keeping grass alive. Every once in a while the weather cooperates and allows superintendents to achieve ideal course conditions. There is no denying the importance of weather as it relates to course conditioning, and the ramifications of weather trends and events may not be readily apparent to most golfers. How many times have you heard, "We've had a lot of rain, so the course must be great, right?"

Read More

USGA LIVE WEBCAST - REGISTRATION NOW OPEN
PREPARING PUTTING GREENS FOR WINTER STRESS

Live webcast at 9 a.m. EST, Tuesday, Nov. 18.

Last year, polar vortexes, record-setting cold temperatures and impressive snow and ice totals seemed to be daily news headlines. This year experts are predicting another frigid winter. Join the agronomists from the USGA Green Section in a short presentation discussing three simple ways to winterize your greens to reduce the potential for turf loss caused by cold, ice or wind desiccation.

Audience participation is encouraged. If there is something you really want to know about preparing your golf course for the upcoming winter, the USGA agronomic staff is ready to help.

Date: Tuesday, Nov. 18, at 9 a.m. EST.

Register Now

USGA AGRONOMIST POSITION NOW OPEN

The USGA is actively seeking applicants for an agronomist position in the Northeast Region. For specific details on the requirements and application process, please follow this link: USGA Agronomist Position. The deadline for application is November 30, 2014.

USGA ANNOUNCES GREEN SECTION DEPARTMENT CHANGES

The USGA Green Section is pleased to announce several exciting changes within the department. This realignment of duties and programs will further enhance the Green Section's service to the industry.

The first announcement encompasses the Green Section's continued responsibilities in conjunction with USGA championships. Darin Bevard has been promoted to the new Green Section position of Director, Championship Agronomy. He will be the lead agronomist for the U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open, U.S. Senior Open, U.S. Amateur and U.S. Women's Amateur. In addition to his work for these specific championships, he will oversee the Green Section agronomy staff as it continues its involvement with the agronomic preparations of the other USGA championships. Darin has a wide breadth of expertise in his new role as he has been a staff agronomist in the Mid-Atlantic Region since 1996 and director of the region since 2012.

The second departmental change is the promotion of Chris Hartwiger to Director, Course Consulting Service (CCS). Chris' duties will involve overseeing the planning, direction and execution of the USGA Course Consulting Service. He will work directly with Green Section agronomists on the development and dissemination of science-based and practical sustainable management practices solutions to help golf facilities. Chris has been an agronomist in the Southeast Region since 1995. He will continue to conduct some CCS visits in the Southeast while guiding the business plan for the overall program.

Effective Dec. 1, 2014, the Green Section regions will be realigned, reducing the current eight regions to four, to deliver better service to our Course Consulting Service customers and to improve efficiency. The overall changes are summarized below:

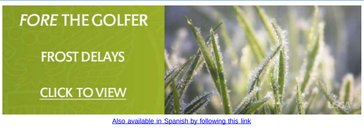
* The current Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Regions will combine to form the new *Northeast Region*. Dave Oatis will serve as the Regional Director. Elliott Dowling, Adam Moeller, and Jim Skorulski are the agronomists available to the golf courses in the Northeast Region. Another agronomist position, to be based in the Glen Mills, PA office, will be added.

* The new *Southeast Region* will be a combination of the states within the current Southeast and Florida Regions and the addition of Louisiana and Arkansas. John Foy will handle the Regional Director duties with the support of agronomists Todd Lowe and Patrick O'Brien.

* The current North-Central and Mid-Continent Regions will combine to form the new *Central Region*. Regional Director Keith Happ will be joined by John Daniels and Bob Vavrek as agronomists providing expertise to golf courses in the Central Region.

* The current Southwest and Northwest Regions will combine to form the new *West Region*. Pat Gross will serve as the Regional Director. Larry Gilhuly, Ty McClellan, and Brian Whitlark are agronomists in the West Region. Early in his USGA career, Ty worked as an agronomist in the Mid-Continent Region and in recent years focused his efforts in the Green Section's Education Program. Ty will relocate to the Southern California regional office, joining Pat Gross.

It has been nearly two decades since significant changes have been made to the Green Section regions. We look forward to continuing our history of providing excellent customer-focused consulting services to golf facilities. For more information on the USGA Course Consulting Service, directly contact any regional agronomist, or view the USGA Course Consulting Service digital brochure.



Also available in Spanish by following this link

REGIONAL UPDATES

REGIONAL UPDATES

The USGA Green Section is divided into eight regions staffed by agronomists who work with golf facilities on care of the golf course. USGA agronomists provide regular regional updates outlining current issues and observations from the field. Be sure to view updates from multiple regions as featured ideas, techniques and solutions to problems often apply to other parts of the country.

NORTHEAST REGION

The brilliant colors of fall are here, which means winter is right around the corner. There is still time to take protective measures to safeguard turf from winterkill damage. Lest we forget, we don't want a repeat of 2014.

Read More

MID-ATLANTIC REGION

Preparing golf courses for late-season play can be challenging. Be patient and remember that frost delays keep not only you off the golf course but also prevent the maintenance staff from conducting course setup tasks.

Read More

SOUTHEAST REGION

Do you have ultradwarf bermudagrass greens? If so, here are the answers to questions you need to know about the use of covers for cold-weather protection.

Read More

FLORIDA REGION

Sandhill cranes are nonmigratory birds commonly seen on Florida golf courses. When white grubs are present, sandhill cranes can cause significant damage. Learn how to coexist with these beautiful birds with guidance from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Read More

NORTH-CENTRAL REGION

Identifying areas on your course where shade is a problem and selectively pruning problem trees now will pay dividends for 2015 and beyond. Remember, a well-designed tree management program benefits the turf as well as trees.

Read More

MID-CONTINENT REGION

If only there was more time to get things done on the golf course without interruption from play. Routinely closing the course for maintenance is a cost-effective approach to improving course conditions while maximizing staff productivity.

Read More

NORTHWEST REGION

Excess thatch is a major detriment to turfgrass health and playing quality, whether it is on greens, approaches, collars, tees or fairways. In the Northwest Region, controlling thatch on fairways can be difficult, particularly those fairways with significant creeping bentgrass populations.

Read More

SOUTHWEST REGION

Turfgrass breeders have made great strides in recent years improving the quality and shade tolerance of different bermudagrass varieties. But just how shade tolerant are some of these new varieties? Research at Auburn University is helping answer this question.

Read More

SUBSCRIBE TO THE USGA *GREEN SECTION RECORD*

TEXT "GREENSECTION" TO "22828" OR CLICK HERE

Offering the latest information on golf course management, turfgrass culture, environmental issues, research and economic sustainability.

IMPORTANT LINKS

USGA Privacy Policy
USGA Green Section Home Page
USGA Staff Contact Information
Course Consulting Service Information
USGA Turfgrass and Environmental Research Online (TERO)
Policies for the Reuse of USGA Green Section Publications

©2014 by United States Golf Association®

Policies for the Reuse of USGA Green Section Publications

USGA Green Section publications are made available through the courtesy of the United States Golf Association (USGA®). The reuse of these materials is authorized only if the following conditions are met in their entirety. This policy applies to all Green Section publications, including articles, videos, presentations, and webcasts.
1) Adherence to all components of our Conditions for Reuse policy.
2) Inclusion of the appropriate Reprint Permission Language.
3) Notification of your Intent To Reprint Content.

The USGA Green Section Record (ISSN 2156-5813) is published biweekly via electronic mail by the United States Golf Association®.

Golf House, Far Hills, NJ 07931
USGA Green Section
908.234.2300