

# TurfComms



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**PURPOSE:** To pass on what we learn willingly and happily to others in the profession so as to improve turf conditions around the country.

**TEXAS TURF CONF.:** For me the Conference started off with Dr. Watson formerly of Toro. Who was one of the few present 50 years ago for the first of this annual event. He noted that turf maintenance was now considered to be a 50 billion dollar industry. Dr. Coleman Ward's first talk was titled Opportunities and Challenges in Turfgrass for the 21st Century. I found his talk full of little nuggets of information.

Such as: there are currently 4,500 students enrolled in two year turf schools in the US, 2000 in four year programs, 25 at the masters level and 9 at the Ph.D.. level. His contacts felt that two year programs would go to 3 years soon and four year programs to five years. They will need to if one of his latter comments is true. He quoted one professor as saying that if he gave the same test to the current students as he used 20 years ago only 5% would pass. Dr. Ward said in asking around he felt that the name of the game in education had definitely become a numbers game. Schools are rewarded by the number of students they have enrolled not by the quality of education that the students receive. I agree with him from what I have been seeing at pre-college level in my own home town/city.

The various people he talked to about future educational needs for superintendents made it clear that more emphasis was needed on public relations and personnel management. The ability to handle these two areas has definitely spelled out the success or failure of my former students. I

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think we have all seen superintendents that were not particularly good grass growers succeed in the industry because of their ability to handle the public relations and personnel management responsibilities of their position.

He predicted golf course crews in the year 2020 would have more supervisors and technicians. I would say that some of the more exclusive/high budgeted clubs are almost there. He foresees a chief superintendent with two superintendents and an assistant supt. under him. Then five technicians: 1) irrigation, 2) mechanic, 3) pesticide applicator, 4) wild life/grounds, and 5) electronics technician. I didn't like hearing that there would be even more corporate managed golf courses but it is hard to deny that this has been the trend over my life time.

He predicted new golf courses would be more player and maintenance friendly although longer. The goal a faster round or more \$s in the owner's pocket book. Higher CECs in the root zone mixes for greens, less emphasis on perched water table, and more on air movement into the mix. One piece of data he brought out in regard to air movement was Auburn research that showed a 20% increase in bentgrass root growth using Sub-air and a 105% increase when combined with Primo use.

Dr. Monica Elliott, Univ. of Florida pathologist, discussed **algae control**. In her research on the subject she found Daconil at 3.5 oz/1000 was as effective or more so than Fore/Dithane, or Algaen-X/Consan 20. If Daconil was better than these two on some occasions. She noted in her research the green dye in Fore was of no benefit for algae control. She urged those with algae problems to get their algaecide on before predicted rainy periods when outbreaks might be expected and to note that your goal is to coat the soil surface not the grass blades -- use lots of water.

She discouraged superintendents from using hydrated lime which may get rid of algae temporarily but by raising the pH may encourage further blue-green algae growth.

Dr. Pat Cobb, Auburn Univ., AL entomologist, talked about **mole crickets**. I learned the following: 1) They are more likely to be found on slopes with southern exposures. I had already learned they did not like low wet areas. 2) They don't like lemon scented Joy. You can spray this with a pump up sprayer down tunnels to flush them out. The rate is one tablespoon/gallon. 3) Chipco's Choice™ lasts a year. At \$315/A applied it ought to. Choice™ does not control grubs and because the Southern mole cricket will feed on grubs you may have an increase in grubs after its use.

I missed the first portion of Mike Veron's talk on Job Security, Contracts and Communications. Mr. Veron is an attorney-at-law and a USGA Committeeman. I looked around and concluded the wrong guys were in the room. The ones there already knew that they had to be tactful when handling members; that they needed to be visible and communicate using bulletin boards and the club newsletter. That it was wise to play golf with the member some and be positive when listening to members.

In listening to Dr. Bob Shearman's talk on what's new in **bentgrass** I did not realize that SR1020 was as susceptible to Brown Patch as Penncross; or that Providence had such good Dollar



Spot and Brown Patch resistance. But, when you realize where they were developed it is understandable that an AZ desert selection (SR1020) would not have to be resistant to Brown Patch to look good in that location. But, a Rhode Island selection (Providence) would have to be Dollar Spot and Brown Patch resistant. Just as Crenshaw a Dallas, TX selection must tolerate heat but does not need to be resistant to Dollarspot.

For me the Wednesday morning program was the highlight of this three day event. Gene Taylor of TX A & M, College Station, gave a talk on **irrigation research** done by John Jordan. This was done on a large **bentgrass green** seeded in the Fall of 1996. The treatments were irrigation frequency of: 1) every day, 2) every other day, and 3) every fourth day. All treatments received the same amount of water given in either small frequent applications or larger less frequent applications. The following cultivars of creeping bentgrass were included: L-93, Crenshaw, A-4, Penncross, Mariner, Seaside, Southshore, Putter and SR1020.

The preliminary findings are: 1) the highest density were on the every other day irrigation frequency plots. Cultivars L-93, Crenshaw and A-4 were at the top. 2) The thinnest turf plots had the highest soil temperatures. These were Penncross, Mariner and Seaside. 3) only on Sept. 4th was there a significant quality difference between irrigation treatments significant in this first season. The plots being irrigated every fourth day were superior to those being watered daily. Amount of algae present was directly correlated with the low quality readings for the plots irrigated daily. 4) Shoot and root density increased with increased spacing between irrigations. 5) Certain cultivars were more stressed than others by the every fourth day irrigation. L-93 and Crenshaw showed the lowest amount of stress.

Dr. Coleman Ward discussed **Spring Transition of Overseeded Bermudagrass**. One of my clients who was not going to be there for that talked expressed an interest in it so I took a few more notes than I might have otherwise. Most of what he said was not new information but Dr. Ward speaks with a lot of wisdom. I am only going to summarize here but if you wish I have a longer set of notes I will send to readers.

The first approach to the problem is taken in the Fall; be sure soil potassium levels are high. Second, delay overseeding if possible; especially if the bermudagrass is not fully healthy to begin with. Third, use a preventative fungicide during overseeding. Fourth, don't allow turf to dry out in Fall and Winter. Remember what determines the persistence of the overseeding. Genetics, temperature, moisture are the main three. The most persistent genetical material resides in creeping bentgrass and perennial ryegrass.

The amount of seedbed preparation is definitely a factor on winter survival of the bermudagrass. Conditions that determine this are: level of thatch, species overseeded, date of overseeding, bermudagrass cultivar, amount of off-types, and whether Primo is used. I thought this last inclusion was very interesting. He noted that if Primo is used less preparation is needed. Ed. - If less prep. is needed than the bermudagrass survives better.

He asked and answered the perennial questions, *Does overseeding hurt the bermudagrass? Yes!* Then, *Does overseeding reduce winter kill (injury)? No!* He noted that he had never seen a detrimental effect on the bermudagrass due to nitrogen rate on the overseeding. He felt that

reduced overseeding rates were bad in that you got a strong overseeded plant that was very difficult to kill.

With *Poa trivialis* greens you need to get on a fungicide program about March 15th that is unless you don't mind a very rapid dying of the *Poa trivialis*. He noted Pythium problems as being the primary concern. I would stress Brown Patch. He feels perennial ryegrass is easier to work with. By this I felt he meant that given normal situations you could more easily ease it out gradually.

He felt strongly that at least in athletic field maintenance core aeration, vertical mowing and scalping had no effect on perennial ryegrass persistence. My notes are not clear on his thoughts concerning withholding irrigation. He did say that nitrogen fertilization was your only tool. He stated that the following items result in a **faster transition**: warm weather, dry weather, high nitrogen rates in the Spring, and closer mowing. He felt that vertical mowing and close mowing were the worse things you could do to the bermudagrass.

Common mistakes made at transition he stated were: 1) aerifying too early, 2) letting the greens dry out, 3) misapplying fertilizer, and 4) lowering the height of cut. He strongly suggested you not apply the following preemerge herbicides to a *Poa trivialis* overseeding: Surflan, Dimension, XL, Pendimethalin, Regalstar, and Ronstar.

Scott Abernathy, a TX A&M graduate student, discussed some **creeping bentgrass** seed blending research. This consists of plots planted Nov. 1996 to pure cultivars, and two, and three-way blends. The early results from this study showed the following: **Crenshaw and L-93** were the top cultivars. By October they had seen that two way blends were a tad better than three way blends and quite a bit better than solitary cultivars. Crenshaw had a positive effect on a blend whereas, Penncross had a negative effect on a blend. For unknown reasons L-93 gave better quality with Penncross than Crenshaw did although when seeded as a pure stand Crenshaw was better than L-93. They had not yet find the disease resistant improvements they expected from blending.

Jason Gray, another TX A&M graduate student, went over **bermudagrass cultivar** research. In establishment trials using plugs MS Supreme and Tifgreen were the fastest while; Tifdwarf, Baby, Champion, Floradwarf, Lakewood, Miniverde and TifEagle were the slowest. Tifdwarf had the highest seedhead production and the greatest number of rhizomes. The latter by a considerable number. Champion covered better from sprigging than the others; it also produced the greatest amount of thatch. TifEagle produced the least amount of thatch. Champion and MiniVerde had the highest density. Tifdwarf recovered from heavy verticutting much better than other cultivars. Over all cultivars, plots that were vertically mowed frequently and lightly were better than those verticut heavily and infrequently.

All cultivars were **overseeded** this Fall with no seedbed preparation. The seed were merely topdressed with 0.2 inches of the soil mix. Under these conditions *Poa trivialis* emerged better than other overseeded grasses.

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