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# Tee to Green

Sept./Oct. 1988

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Volume XVIII, No. 14

## Turf Covers for Problem Greens and Tees

By Larry Pakkala C.G.C.S.  
Woodway C.C.

At Woodway Country Club we've been using turf covers for the past four fall and winter seasons to protect our 4th and 13th greens which meet at a high point on the golf course. Both greens are surrounded by large white oaks and, therefore, are covered by dense shade in summer. Consequently, where there is shade, there is Poa Annua and difficult growing conditions.

Now you can begin to see why I've tried turf covers. Basically, it's difficult area to grow putting quality turf for today's golfing demands. Sure we could have raised the cutting heights to 3/16" and mowed 3 times a week, but how would those greens compare to the other 16 greens on the course where speeds of 8.5 - 9 on the stimpmeter are the norm.

So, four years ago we began using turf covers. This article is to help explain to my fellow turf professionals what we experienced along the way. The improvements have been outstanding to say the least.

The first step in preparing for the use of turf covers is to begin mowing a temporary green somewhere in the approach to the green you wish to cover. Start this process in early to mid October to insure a reasonable putting surface for winter play. If you don't have winter play at your club then of course this will not be necessary. Mow a temporary at 3/16" to 1/4" three times a week and topdressing once a week. Naturally, you will be able to stop mowing and topdressing when the grass plant begins to shut down in November. Spray your temporary as you would your greens for snow mold. Remember, the temporary will probably see most of its play in March just before you take your

covers off your regular greens, so you want to insure a reasonable putting surface in March to keep those "early birds" from complaining about your covers. When they see the end results you'll convince them of their usefulness.

Well in advance of preparing your temporary green, turf covers should be purchased. This will insure their arrival for late November use. There aren't many types available today but two of the most common covers are Duponts "Remy" and Typar". We have used both products and we will say that they are only reasonably durable but will get the job done nicely. "Typar" may be a little more durable. Know how much cover in square feet you wish to order and order an extra sheet or two in case midway through winter you need to make some repairs. Order your material early enough to insure delivery before Thanksgiving as soon after is the best time to lay your covers. Which brings me to the most important aspect of using turf covers, "timing", laying and most importantly *removal*.

We like to put our covers down just after Thanksgiving and absolutely before December 1. This is a good time as usually by now you've applied your snow mold protectant and dormant feeding has also been completed. We also topdress heavily at this time to protect the turfgrass crown from winter desiccation. But on problem greens the covers are added insurance. Play has significantly slowed by this date and of course you want your covers down before the first snow fall.

Placing the covers is easy and a 6,000 square foot green can be covered within an hour or two provided it isn't too windy. Blow any debris off the green and

begin laying the covers one at a time tacking down with the small metal stakes that the cover manufacturer will provide. We have found that a stake every two feet on each side of the cover is sufficient to keep it from lifting during those windy winter days. If for any reason you need to walk on the cover, do so with tennis shoes or a soft soled shoe. The covers are tender and a small puncture can later on become a large hole with a sudden gust of wind. Once all the covers have been tacked down the last step we take in securing our covers is to surround the entire circumference of the green with snow fence. The fencing has a multi-facet purpose. First, it secures the outer edges of the covers and keeps wind and leaves from getting underneath. Secondly, it keeps out intruders i.e., sleigh riders, deer and other animals, and last but not least, the dreaded winter golfer! You don't necessarily need this step but I highly recommend it to keep your covers from looking like swiss cheese. The initial investment for covers and now fencing is approximately \$800-\$1,000 per green. This may sound like a lot but if you take the time to secure your covers properly and store them properly in the summer months this cost becomes easier to swallow. We've got covers and fence that we will be using for the fifth season this year.

After the covers are in place you can forget about them until Spring, with the exception of an inspection once in a while to make sure they are still secure. Remember, you must keep every square inch covered for 4 months or the whole practice will be a failure.

This leads me to the most important of all steps to insure your success, and that is

Continued on page 3



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## GCSAA News:

### GCSAA/Hall-Kimbrell Join Forces For Environmental Auditing Service to Golf Courses

Coping with various regulatory obligations and managing environmental and safety risks are increasingly recognized as important professional responsibilities of today's golf course superintendent.

To help superintendents continue to meet these responsibilities, the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) formally announced today that it has contracted with one of the nation's leading environmental consulting firms to develop the first comprehensive environmental management system for the golf course industry. Hall-Kimbrell Environmental Services, Inc. will join GCSAA in presenting this new concept to attendees of the 60th International Golf Course Conference and Show, Feb. 6-13, 1989, in Anaheim, Calif.

The GCSAA/Hall-Kimbrell package being developed will include an environmental self-audit questionnaire and notebook along with videotape training materials designed to provide management assistance in areas such as pesticide use, storage and disposal, underground storage tank regulations, OSHA requirements and general risk management. Completed self-audit materials will be individually reviewed by Hall-Kimbrell's professional staff to provide specific recommendations and analysis.

"The up-front cost of developing these materials is several hundred thousand dollars, which Hall-Kimbrell has decided to invest," noted GCSAA Executive Director John M. Schilling. "The result will be a very valuable new management tool with low unit cost to individual superintendents."

The cost of a professional environmental audit can exceed \$10,000. The price of the new GCSAA/Hall-Kimbrell system is expected to be less than \$1,000.

Steve Wharton, project manager for Hall-Kimbrell, has been collecting information from golf courses across the nation in a series of site visits. Technical advisor for the overall GCSAA/Hall-Kimbrell effort is Dr. Wynan Hock, plant pathologist and extension pesticide specialist at Pennsylvania State University.

### GCSAA Conference Sets Sales Record Five Months Early

This has been a record-breaking year for the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA). Earlier this year, the association welcomed its 8,000th member and as of today space sales for the 60th International Golf Course Conference and Trade Show — slated for Anaheim in early 1989 — have reached a record five months in advance.

To date, more than 117,960 net square feet of display space has been committed to various manufacturers and distributors from all over the world. This surpasses the previous record of 112,000 net square feet in Houston earlier this year.

"We still have some space available, but it's truly incredible how quickly everyone has responded," said Karyn Davis, sales and marketing manager for GCSAA. "The industry is booming, and exhibitors are eager to display their products to the buyers — the golf course superintendent."

The show will run Feb. 6-13 in the Anaheim Convention Center and will be among the largest to be presented there. The GCSAA Conference and Show is a one-stop marketplace for today's golf course superintendents from around the world. More than 60 percent of the exhibitors have indicated that they will be revealing their new product lines and services for 1989 at the show.

## Turf Covers

*Continued from page 1*

the difficult moment of deciding when to remove the turf cover. Golfers will be clammering to play in late March, trying to coax you to open the green or greens. We have found in our practices and by checking our records, that we have never removed a cover before *March 31*. All it takes is one cold snap, if you've removed your covers early, the whole process will deteriorate rapidly. Use March 31 as a deadline, after that you're safe to remove them. Unfortunately, the spring of 1988 was not the norm, and anyone using covers for the first time would be easily discouraged. This past spring was very, very unseasonably cold. Our covered greens almost lost all their color by the end of April, but because we left the covers on until March 31 they did not lose their vigor.

The final procedure after removing the turf covers is to spray immediately with a fungicide, as the turf at this time is extre-

mely lush and susceptible to disease. Because it has been growing under the cover, we feel it uses up the snow mold protectant we applied in November. So, don't wait, apply a fungicide immediately. Chipco 26019 at 4 oz/100 sq. ft. has worked well in preventing late season snow mold and leaf spot fungi from forming.

Turf covers can be used for many other purposes: i.e. trap liners, erosion control, weed barriers in ornamental plantings, and especially new seedings. Wait until you see how fast seed will germinate under a turf cover!

Here are the benefits I have found from using turf covers:

- 1) Full dark green turf canopy established by April.
- 2) Roots developed and vigorous by April 1.

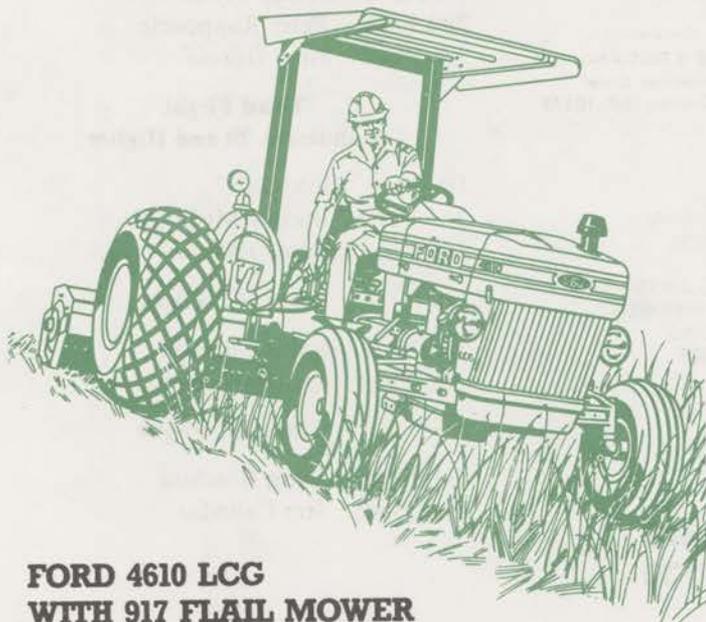
3) Putting surface thick and healthy and it should remain that way all through the season.

4) Seed germination in 3-5 days (approximately 10° warmer under cover).

5) A happy membership!

At Woodway #4 and #13 greens have been perennial problems. Lloyd Stott, Superintendent in the 1940's, 50's & 60's, used to cover them with pine boughs, a common practice in the old days. The point I'm trying to make is if you have a green or a tee that's a problem in the spring, and you can't get grass on them to grow before May or even June, use turf covers. You will find it is as convincing as light weight mowing of fairways.

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## Slate of GCSAA Candidates Set

The Nominating Committee of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) has submitted a slate of candidates to the association's board of directors.

The committee selected the candidates during recent meetings at the association's headquarters in Lawrence, Kan.

The candidates' names will be on the official ballot when elections are held during the 1989 Annual Meeting in Anaheim, Calif., Feb. 13.

The nominees are:

For President: Dennis D. Lyon, CGCS, City of Aurora, Colo., Golf Division;

For Vice President: Stephen G. Cadenelli, CGCS, Metedeconk Golf Club, Jackson, N.J., and Gerald L. Faubel, CGCS, Saginaw Country Club, Mich.;

For Directors: Gary Grigg, CGCS, Shadow Glen Golf Club, Olathe, Kan.; Randy Nichols, CGCS, Cherokee

Town and Country Club, Dunwoody, Ga.; Michael Wallace, CGCS, Hop Meadow JCountry Club, Simsbury, Conn.; and Randy Zidik, CGCS, Rolling Hills Country Club, McMurray, Pa.

The president and vice president are elected to one-year terms, and directors are elected to two-year terms. Three directors will be elected.

The president will appoint the organization's secretary-treasurer after the election.

Currently, Lyon is vice president of GCSAA; Cadenelli and Nichols are directors; and Faubel is secretary-treasurer.

John A. Segui, CGCS, currently is president; Donald E. Hearn, CGCS, is immediate past president; and Joseph G. Baidy, CGCS, William R. Roberts, CGCS, and Kenneth A. Sakai, CGCS, are directors.

## Final Round of Championship Tournament

### at Wykagyl Country Club

The final round of the Championship Tournament was held at Wykagyl Country Club on September 20, 1988. The weather cooperated and superintendent Vince Sharkey and his staff had the course in beautiful condition. This was the second and final round of this tournament. The scores for the day were combined with the first round totals from the August meeting held at Mahopac Golf Club. The well attended event was followed by a very informative talk on wetlands and their relationship to golf courses in the area.

The results of the Tournament are as follows:

#### Championship Flight Handicaps 0-10

- 1st Place Chuck Fatum
- 2nd Place Mike Medonis
- 3rd Place Earl Millett
- 4th Place Matt Ceplo

#### Second Flight Handicaps 11-19

- 1st Place Dennis Flynn
- 2nd Place Peter Rappoccio
- 3rd Place Tony Grasso

#### Third Flight Handicaps 20 and Higher

- 1st Place Bob Tosh
- 2nd Place Barney Misiura
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**November 17**

Met GCSA Annual Business Meeting,  
 Ridgeway, White Plains, NY Earl Millett  
 Superintendent

**December 5-8**

New Jersey Turfgrass Expo '88 Resorts  
 International, Atlantic City, NJ

For further information contact  
 Dr. Henry Indyk, General Chairman  
 New Jersey Turfgrass Expo '88  
 Cook College - Rutgers University  
 Box 231, New Brunswick, NJ 08903

**December 10, Saturday**

Met GCSA Christmas Party  
 Westchester Hills Country Club  
 White Plains, NY

Matt Ceplo, Superintendent

**January 11**

Met GCSA Winter Seminar  
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Fred Scheyhing, Superintendent

**February 6-13**

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## GCSAA Golf Championship In Palm Springs

More than 450 members of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA) are expected to gather in Palm Springs, Calif., several days before the organization's 60th International Golf Course Conference and Trade Show to compete in the association's golf championship.

The two-day tournament will be played on four courses in the desert resort area. The PGA West courses that will host the championship will be the TPC Stadium Golf Course, site of the annual Skins Game, and the Jack Nicklaus Resort Course, where the 1988 PGA Tour Qualifying School was held. Other participants will play the Citrus Course at LaQuinta and the Mission Hills Resort Course. The first three are in LaQuinta and the latter is in Rancho Mirage.

Many of today's superintendents are avid golfers, and their knowledge about the game plays an important role in the maintenance of their courses. "When you play, you can sympathize better and have a better understanding for the course difficulty," says defending champion Dave Powell, golf course superintendent at Myers Park Country Club in Charlotte, N.C. Powell won his second GCSAA championship title early in 1988 in Houston.



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## A Stressful Year

C. R. Skogley

Professor Turfgrass Mgt.  
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Someone told me recently that if a golf course superintendent said he had no turf problems this year he had to be lying. All I can say, if anyone escaped with all grass intact, he had to be a magician. In my thirty plus years as a turfgrass agronomist I do not recall a season in which the weather treated us quite so bad. Last year was hard on grass because of a prolonged drought through much of the growing season. Without good irrigation much of our turf was totally dormant or dead by the end of August. With adequate irrigation there weren't many problems.

We had good rainfall September of 1987, but October and November were again very dry months. The fall season is critical in the life of a grass plant so that is the time when it recovers from summer stresses, builds up reserves and forms buds for leaf and root growth for the following season. Certainly, some of this year's problems can be attributed to the poor fall, 1987, growing season. Renovation and overseeding in the fall of 1987 was not as successful as normal and for the same reason.

Early season, 1988, didn't get off to a good start either. Temperatures and rainfall were considerably below normal well into June. Grasses did not green up and make normal growth till much later than usual. Only with heavy early fertilization were grasses greened and this is a no-no. March, April, and May is the peak of root growth, and feeding, particularly heavy feeding, results in green grass and top growth, *but*, at the expense of root growth.

When we are not getting normal leaf growth and extension during the spring, the various leaf spot diseases are more serious. During leaf spot season the disease really digs in when leaves are not being renewed fairly rapidly. The longer each leaf stays on the plant, and is not mowed off, the more time leaf spot fungus has to grow and produce damage. These bad conditions prevailed this spring. Even our newer leaf spot resistant Kentucky bluegrasses, used by our sod producers, were widely damaged this year

and many of them had to resort to fungicides.

Rainfall records here at our University Station provide some interesting statistics. For the month of April we had a total of 3.01 inches, but 2.27 inches fell on one day — the 28th. In May we again recorded 3.01 inches, but 2.5 inches occurred between the 11th and 25th. Of the 3.15 inches recorded in June 2.5 inches fell on one day — the 26th. For July we had 7.19 inches but 6.1 inches fell between the 20th and 28th. We had only one rainfall in August. Over one inch fell on the 24th (Our Field Day).

We all know the weather was erratic this year. From August 3rd through the 15th we had thirteen nights with temperatures above 70°. Our somewhat coastal location is cooler than where many of you are located also.

Dollarspot, red thread, brown patch, Pythium and summer patch were all common and variously damaging this summer. Grasses actually drowned or cooked in poorly drained areas during the later July, early August period. Fungicides didn't help in these situations. Wet wilt was common and daily syringing was required in many instances.

You can tell your golfers and club officials that this was an extremely difficult growing season and few courses escaped the loss of some grass. A season such as this can be a great teacher, however. I believe we learned the value of good root systems and well aerated soils. Grasses in and around aerifier holes certainly stood out during the summer. The need for daily syringing is proof of a poor root system.

### Suggestions for avoiding similar problems in future years:

1. Aerify turf extensively as early as possible in September to aid in improved grass growth through the fall season. Early aerification will help with root growth and permit rapid recovery of the turf.
2. Topdress with a good compost-type dressing if possible. This helps replen-

ish minor and trace elements, and improves nutrient holding capacity of the soil (as opposed to straight sand).

3. Overseed in conjunction with aerifying and topdressing, where needed. The slicer-seeders are by far the best way (Mataway, Jacobsen, Olathe).
4. Feed liberally through September and early October, and possibly in late November. Give the turf all the fertilizer it needs to recover from the summer and to build reserves. Don't overdue, however.
5. Use an effective fungicide as late as possible to prevent snow molds.
6. Refrain from early spring fertilizer applications. Don't worry about trying to green up the grass early. If it's been well fed through the fall it will have plenty of nutrients to promote a good root system. Remember, most root production occurs from March to May. Early feeding reduces this growth.
7. Refrain from watering in early season unless the soil gets unusually dry. If we keep the soil saturated with water during the spring we exclude oxygen and prevent normal root growth.
8. Aerify and topdress as late in the spring as possible. Wait until the grasses are growing vigorously so recovery is rapid. We aren't interrupting early season root growth, and we are also providing soil aeration closer to the stress periods of the summer.
9. Consider changing cutting height. I believe we have gone overboard with cutting heights. Anything less than 3/16 inch is asking for trouble. With the excellent mowing and grooming devices available, with increased frequency of mowing and with adjusting watering practices, I believe we can provide fast, true putting surfaces without scalping our grasses. Close mowing during cool seasons may not be lethal but raising the cut through July and August is certainly advised. The 1988 growing season provided a lesson in the value of using all we know about agronomics.

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