

# REDUCE THE RISK

*How coarse is your course?*

by KEITH A. HAPP

**A** GOLF COURSE is a wonderful place to exercise, experience the outdoors, and be with friends. People of all ages are being drawn to the game. Private clubs have waiting lists, and daily-fee operations accept requests for starting times often days in advance. Even though increasing participation in the game of golf is good for the sport, some facilities have reached a point of saturation. And with this increase in demand comes an increase in the wear and tear courses and facilities endure.

The effects of traffic stress on turf, particularly concentrated foot traffic, have been studied extensively. Traffic stress is also a concern in the clubhouse and the pro shop. For example, increased traffic flow reduces the life expectancy of carpeting in the buildings and the floorboards of golf carts. The interval of replacement for these items changes inversely as traffic flow increases. The fact is, traffic stress is one of the variables that must be managed throughout the entire facility as it is prepared for daily use.

The growing trend toward the use of spikeless alternatives has addressed some of the most important traffic wear problems. Many facilities are now banning the use of metal spikes in favor of a wide array of spikeless alternatives. However, as with any new technique, there comes a need to carefully examine the benefits and risks involved with implementation.

This turf tip comes from John Kois, superintendent of Hanover Country

Club in Ashland, Virginia. Hanover Country Club adopted a spikeless policy early in the 1997 season. The pros and cons of using spikeless alternatives were well discussed and a voluntary trial period was initiated to expose members to the eventual policy change. Additionally, the trial period provided an opportunity to examine the entire facility for potential areas of concern. The footing on bridges, stairs, and wooden walkways topped the list. When these surfaces became wet from rain or irrigation, traction was affected. As such, enhancing traction was identified as the highest priority and the duty of care for these areas was assigned to John and his staff.

After careful examination, it was decided that a combination product would be used to enhance traction as well as help preserve the wooden surfaces throughout the course. Tnemec Series 27, a fast-drying epoxy paint, was selected as the carrier for a coarse, abrasive sand-blasting material. This paint would help preserve the wooden surfaces, and it was available in a wide array of colors. Black Beauty, a sand-blasting material consisting mainly of boiler slag, was incorporated into the paint. After a series of tests, a mixture ratio of one pound of sand-blasting material to one gallon of paint was determined to produce the desired effect. The consistency of this formulation allowed the application of the final combination to be performed with a deep-nap paint roller. Naturally, at any time during the application process,

additional sand-blasting material could be surface applied to further modify the finished texture. When the combination was dry, it produced a surface that was reasonably wear tolerant, aesthetically acceptable and, most important, coarse textured.

Officials charged with the duty of care for a facility can help limit risk by carefully planning and communicating a clear policy of intent prior to implementing a policy change. Indications are that the use of spikeless golf shoes seems to be the way of the future. There is little argument that the surfaces on which the game is played clearly benefit from their use, as do those who use them. These benefits, however, cannot overshadow the need to manage as many variables as possible associated with facility operation.

The game of golf is played on turf, and justifiably it is this portion of the course that receives the most attention. However, all areas of the course fall under the care of the turf manager — even those that may not receive direct play. Bridges, walkways, and stairs do have an impact on the smooth operation of the facility. Carefully examine all the areas of the course and *reduce the risk* of use wherever and whenever possible.

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*A combination of fast-drying epoxy paint and sand-blasting material can be used to create and preserve a textured surface. When the combination dries, the surface is wear tolerant, aesthetically acceptable, and coarse textured.*