

TURF TWISTERS

OFF-SEASON PLANNING

Question: In the fall, our golf course superintendent melted the frost off the greens with the sprinklers so that the golfers could play earlier in the morning. Now that it's January, our superintendent refuses to turn on the sprinklers and I'm not sure why. (Oklahoma)

Answer: When the morning temperature is still above freezing in the fall, frost on the greens can be quickly removed with a couple of revolutions of the sprinkler heads. During the winter, when the morning temperatures are close to or below freezing, small applications of water from the irrigation system will often result in ice accumulation. When ice forms, it takes longer for the greens to thaw, and thus, the course may not be fit for play until late morning or early afternoon. For the many golf courses that have to drain their irrigation systems for the winter, sprinkler use for dissipating frost isn't a practical solution.

ESTABLISHES

Question: I want to rebuild some tees and reestablish the surface with hybrid bermudagrass sod, but the only time our management allows me to do the project is during the winter when the bermudagrass is dormant. What do you think about using overseeded sod? Will it root well enough so that we can use it before the end of winter? (Arizona)

Answer: If your only alternative is to do the project in the winter, then overseeded sod is a good choice. While the bermudagrass will not begin active root growth until soil temperatures are around 75°F, the overseeded perennial ryegrass should hold the sod in place well enough for firm footing and good playing quality. You should allow at least four weeks for the sod to establish before opening the tee.

A PATH FOR THE FUTURE

Question: Our golf course is in the midst of a major battle over the direction the course will take in the future. One side wants a "Championship" golf course with many physical changes, while the other side doesn't want to spend any money on necessary course upgrades. Does the USGA have maintenance standards established or do you have suggestions on ways to bridge the gap? (Alabama)

Answer: It is not possible to manage a golf course via a "cookbook" approach. Many factors, including growing conditions, budget, golf course superintendent expertise, construction method, climate, etc. all play a role in how a course should be managed. First and foremost, the superintendent should work in conjunction with the course officials to develop a long-range plan. This plan should include both a financial plan and an architectural plan. Saving dollars and completing changes in-house that are based upon the personal opinion of single-digit golfers has ruined many a golf course. At the same time, there also are many courses that are in need of upgrading, yet the older members are loath to make changes, even if these changes make sense and will have a positive impact. The best answer is the selection of a quality golf course architect who can listen and create a plan, and the course should follow through for the benefit of the majority of the players.