

"Common Sense along with Science wins everytime"

One of the seminars that I was fortunate enough to be invited to participate in, in the Northern California area, was held at a golf course which is hosting a nationally televised tournament early this year [2015]. The seminar was held in November of 2014,

The superintendent [Mr. "M"] of the hosting course was in full attendance at the seminar with his general manager and assistant also in attendance. Upon completion of the seminar I was invited by the superintendent to sit down and discuss existing conditions at the course as well as procedures that were being recommended for him to perform, such as extensive disruptive aerifying. *[The root system of the turf on his greens was around a ½"]*

The professional expert consultants making these aerifying suggestions were doing so based on their own personal experience and not on what condition the greens were presently in, in regards to soil Physical Properties. The superintendent had been aerifying at an aggressive rate for six months upon the request of these experts. The aerifying was causing heaving of turf on the greens, which the experts shrugged off, by saying that more aerifying was needed and that conditions would improve.

The superintendent is a common sense person and was starting to become leery of this extensive aerifying program that was causing damage to his greens. After inspecting the turf and root systems of the greens I strongly recommended that a Physical Properties test be conducted and from that we would see what was needed from an agronomical standpoint.

The physical properties analysis showed that the greens were not in need of disruptive aerification, in fact the opposite was true. The greens were too porous and in need of an increase in regards to water and nutrient holding. With this new knowledge of the Physical Properties added to the knowledge of the Chemical Properties, we were able to start on a new program of venting and top dressing which has resulted [after 4 months] in a **root system that has increased in depth to 2.5". These roots which were prior to the new program sparse and tan in color had now become dense and white in color.**

The putting surfaces increased in density by at least two fold and ball marks are now healing at an acceptable rate rather than staying open for extended periods of time. Between Thanksgiving and Christmas of 2014 this course received 16+ inches of rain after 5 years of drought. Many of the courses in the area suffered turf loss due to the heavy rainfall, however this course took the rain without any negative effects.

The experts who had originally recommended the heavy disruptive aerifying program were impressed with the turnaround and recanted their original recommendations and asked that additional Physical & Chemical Properties testing be done at the end of the year in order to evaluate if any changes needed to be made to the new program.

I have talked with Mr. "M" the superintendent on average every two to three weeks since the original Physical Properties testing was completed in November 2014, and the present agricultural program that has proved so successful was introduced. He informs me that with the healthy greens; rounds have increased, players, management & consultants are happy & everyone is very confident that the course will be ready for the spring tournament regardless of weather.

With common sense being used in place of inflated egos and in conjunction with basic science it is really quite amazing what can be accomplished.

Copyright: January, 2015 David L. Doherty