

It Never Ends

By Dave Doherty

During a conversation with a good friend of mine recently, he confirmed that the new Bermuda grass fairways sprigged last fall were coming along now that the weather had warmed up. Then the conversation turned to how the chemical side of the equation in conjunction with an aerifying and sand top dressing program was being achieved.

During this entire 32 minute conversation on my new Smartphone, not once were the club's greens or bunkers mentioned, and probably for good reason. Eight years earlier when I started working with this club, the *only* conversation was about how to bring the greens up to the level that the members expected and how long it would take to get them there. Now they were meeting members' expectations.

Then the conversation turned to the bunkers, a project that also had been completed. The fairways, the club's third project, had come in very successfully during their first growing season.

We learned a tremendous amount during this eight-year period about getting the greens and bunkers where they were expected to be, but most importantly we learned how to keep them there. A combination of physical properties science and soil chemistry science combined with commonsense and hard work has resulted in this course being one of the finest in northern California, which by the way has a waiting list for members. It's a drive for perfection ... **"It never ends."**

Over the last 20-plus years I have worked with thousands of golf course superintendents, grounds managers, owners, green committees, board of directors, general managers and only God knows who else, and in all of this time I've come to realize that there will always be another project and that's what is so exciting about the turf industry.

The last three months I've had the privilege of sitting in on and being a part of seven board and green committee meetings. Six meetings were most enjoyable and it was a pleasure to participate. The club members of these six golf courses realize that their responsibilities are on going and that **"it never ends."**

The soil and plant chemistry industry has made tremendous strides during the time ISTRC has been involved in researching and monitoring the physical properties of sports turf soils. The two provide a vast assortment of solutions to us as an industry in providing a *consistent* high quality turf that was not thought of just a few short years ago.

The equipment manufacturers have done an outstanding job of listening to the needs of the industry by helping us maintain this high quality of turf that is demanded. Most of all aerifying equipment manufactured over the last five years has variable spacing with variable size tines as standard, allowing us to be more effective in meeting the agronomic needs while at the same time causing minimum disruption to the surface area. Technical advancement, **"it never ends."**

Advancement in understanding the physical properties of soil has become extremely important in allowing us to get a grip on keeping moisture levels in our soil mixes at levels – not too wet and not too dry.

The equipment industry has provided us with soil moisture meters probes that when inserted into the turf to a depth of between two and four inches provide us with the moisture content.

This reading allows us to irrigate in the proper amounts into the proper area of a green or turf. That means no more guessing about the amount of water needed to get the job done. These above ground moisture meters are a tremendous tool for healthy turf and water conservation...this research, **"It never ends."**

But what happened at the meeting with members at the seventh club? The members did not embrace the challenge to allow themselves to move forward. Rather than embracing and enjoying the challenge, they chose to spend over two hours bitching and pointing fingers. What a waste, and like I said, **"It never ends."**

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