

When Re-grassing.....
Which Is More Important – Drains or Greens Mix?

While visiting one of the PGA tour courses recently, I was asked this question: In resurfacing greens what is the most important thing to consider? The question threw me for a moment because there are so many different factors involved.

The quality of irrigation water for instance will tell us if the greens' mix needs to be one that will accommodate frequent flushing. What level of handicap golfer is your club trying to accommodate? This will dictate greens' speed and firmness.

What is our budget and what are our resources, will they be adequate to accommodate the type of turf you are contemplating using for resurfacing? What is the one event that requires the greens to be in their best condition? This is also a major factor in turf type selection.

After all of these questions have been addressed adequately and a decision made on turf type, you need to address the issue of the greens' mix most desirable for the turf type selected.

This particular tour course has had almost four inches of root zone mix added over the last 16 years because of light frequent top dressing. And about a quarter inch of build up per year is normal for the climate in which this course is located.

This PGA course must overseed every year, resulting in an organic build up from the dieback of over-seeded plants. These are the two main reasons for this course considering a re-grassing and bringing the root zone down from the 16-inch depth to the original 12-inch depth recommended by the U.S.G.A. And it's an excellent opportunity to reshape the greens.

The first step in this re-grassing, from the greens mix aspect, is to identify the physical properties in the remaining root zone after removal of the top four inches. The physical analysis includes measuring the root zone for infiltration rates, water holding, air pores and compaction as well as the PSAs and organic levels from the new surface to the gravel layer, in one inch increments.

This information allows for decisions to be made about the remaining root zone and what corrective measures may need to be taken, if any.

With no grass on the greens it is now the perfect time see if the drainage system has been compromised both under and outside of the greens' cavity. With 20-year old greens it is not uncommon to have had new irrigation installed and drainage tiles severed in the process.

Using a camera snake to inspect the drain tiles both under and running away from the green and perform any necessary repairs at that time. This is also an excellent time to check the gravel layer for porousness. Irrigation water containing high sodium and bicarbonates can cause gravel to solidify and prevent water from entering into the drain tiles.

It is also the absolutely perfect time to install four-way gas intercept visual ports with slide/gate valves off the greens. By installing these four-way ports outside of the greens' cavity in the drainage tiles outfall/drainage areas you are able to maintain the legal status of being within USGA recommend specifications.

Dave Doherty is CEO and founder of the International Sports Turf Research Center, Inc. (ISTRC) and holds three patents regarding the testing of sand and soil-based greens. He can be reached at (913) 706-6635 or via email: daveistrc@hotmail.com

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