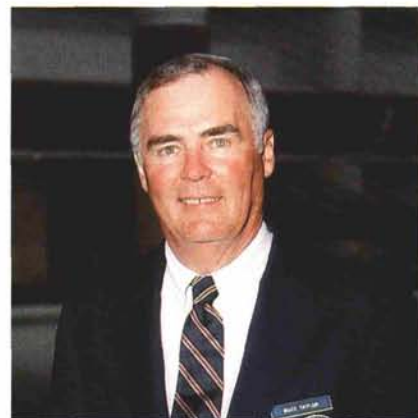


CPR In Golf Course Management: Conservation - Preservation - Regulation

February 26, 1990, Orlando, Florida



F. Morgan Taylor, Jr.

FOR THE NINTH CONSECUTIVE YEAR the annual Green Section Education Conference was held in conjunction with the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America International Turfgrass Conference and Show. This year more than 1000 people attended the Green Section's program on Monday, February 26, at the Orlando Civic Center. F. Morgan Taylor, Jr., of Hobe Sound, Florida, Chairman of the USGA Green Section Committee, introduced the morning's program of 17 speakers who addressed this year's theme, "CPR In Golf Course Management: Conservation - Preservation - Regulation." With environmental concerns becoming increasingly more of an issue on golf courses, the topics in this year's program were especially timely for many in the audience. Following are the full proceedings.

THE BEST TURF TIPS OF 1989 — PART I

One of the most popular annual features of the Education Conference is the Best Turf Tips. This year, ten of the Green Section's agronomists reported on some of the helpful ideas and ingenious innovations they came across while visiting golf course superintendents in every part of the country during 1989. We begin with Part I. Parts II and III appear later in this issue.

Topdressing of a Different Color

by JOHN H. FOY

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IF YOU HAVE watched the broadcast of a golf tournament recently, you have probably noticed the use of dyed green sand to fill divots in tee and fairway areas. With the 1990 GCSAA Show and Conference taking place more or less in the heart of bermudagrass country, my turf tip for this year involves the use of a different colored sand. A winter green management practice that has become fairly common in the South Florida area is incorporating a small quantity of charcoal into the topdressing sand that is periodically applied to greens during the winter season. While at first this may appear to be strictly a southern

management practice, it could be a benefit to others throughout the country.

For many years in South Florida it has been a common practice to apply charcoal or Milorganite to non-overseeded bermuda greens, just prior to the cooler season in an effort to maintain a warmer soil temperature. By maintaining a warmer soil condition for better growth activity, less turf discoloration is experienced during the winter playing season. While Milorganite is fairly easy to apply, to achieve the desired effect a large quantity of it has to be put down, and this results in a negative impact on playability, and in

some cases, increased surface algae problems. The big problem of applying straight charcoal to greens is that it is extremely messy and very unpopular with the golfers. While I have not been able to determine who first came up with the idea, a couple of years ago it was found that charcoal could be mixed with topdressing sand, and this resulted in both a convenient method of getting the material out while reducing the messiness of the charcoal treatment. Today, there are several commercial topdressing suppliers in Florida that provide the option of mixing charcoal into the topdressing sand supplied to the courses.

In observing the use of charcoal topdressing applications, I have noted the occurrence of a very positive growth response the day following the application. The turf has a lusher green color, beyond what one expects from a slight increase in soil temperature. This response has also been observed by others, but a reason for it has really not been determined. The positive impact on turf color is even more pronounced on overseeded greens relative to what is observed with non-overseeded bermuda greens. But a charcoal topdressing application just prior to the occurrence of even record-setting cold temperatures can also make a dramatic difference in bermuda color loss. Thus,

both types of winter greens in the South Florida area are having charcoal applied to them on a fairly regular basis at a number of different courses. One other benefit of charcoal topdressings is that it is helpful in masking ball marks.

Generally, 4 to 6 pounds of charcoal per cubic yard is incorporated to darken the topdressing sand. However, I am aware that as much as 40 pounds per yard has been utilized. Because charcoal is commonly used to deactivate a number of pesticides, some concerns have been expressed about possible complications with maintaining desired pest-control programs. When a small quantity of charcoal is applied in 0.125 to 0.3

cubic yards of topdressing per 1,000 square feet, a problem with a reduction in herbicide and fungicide control programs has not been noticed. Certainly, when higher rates of charcoal are incorporated, this provides an easier and neater means of treating misapplications of pesticides.

In other green management programs, the use of a charcoal topdressing material may improve the rate of spring green-up or boost the rate of growth activity in the fall on bentgrass greens in the North. Given the benefits which have been observed to date, some experimentation with it certainly appears to be warranted.

(Below) Topdressing/charcoal mixture being applied to a green. (Bottom right) Topdressing sand mixed with charcoal (foreground).

