

Rolling Out the Ups and Downs of Green Speed

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These gang-rollers, tended by assistant superintendent Bert Bertram, contribute to surface smoothness and increase putting speed from 6 to 12 inches.

THERE COMES A TIME at every golf course when a special event requires special playing conditions. This usually involves increasing green speed and/or firming the surfaces for a tournament and often includes a request (demand) to lower the height of cut on the greensmowers. This yo-yo movement of bedknives causes problems for superintendents, especially when the events are conducted in July or August in bentgrass country.

At Westmoor Country Club, in the greater Milwaukee area, superintendent Jerry Kershasky has found that special events are not necessarily an irregular occurrence, and that male golfers, at least, delight in firm and fast greens. He is well aware that rollers were once widely used to smooth out surface irregularities in golf turf, especially after winter frost heaving, even though the

practice is frowned upon because of its compacting effect on silt or clay loam soils.

But what about sand? The greens now have a two-inch-deep cap of high-quality, compaction-resistant sand over the old sandy loam bases. This was developed over a period of 16 years by aeration, core removal, and hole filling, plus light and frequent topdressing with pure sand throughout the growing season. Since the uniform, round sand grains resist compaction, he reasoned that periodic rolling would have little adverse effect on turf health.

The Westmoor device was fashioned by Assistant Superintendent Bert Bertram and was based upon an old set of cast-iron rollers prized by neighboring Merrill Hills Country Club. The rollers are 24-inch-long sections of 18-inch-diameter PVC water main pipe. They are filled with concrete except for

an 8-inch hollow pipe surrounding the axle to keep the weight down to about 350 pounds, including its frame. The axle is a 3/4-inch steel shaft run between pillow blocks mounted on the 2-inch angle-iron frames. Trailer hitches join the rolling units to make a maneuverable 3-gang roller, easily pulled by most utility vehicles.

Westmoor greens are usually mowed at a bench setting of 1/8" plus, producing Stimpmeter measurements of about 9 feet. The rolling operation adds about 6 to 12 inches to the reading. About half of the added distance is lost in one day, so the greens return to normal putting speeds in two or three days.

This successful speed manipulation program eliminates the necessity of adjusting the heights of cut and the potential damage to the turf on "those special days."