

United States Golf Association, Green Section
Mid-Continent Region
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USGA Green Section
Turf Advisory Service Report

BELLA VISTA VILLAGE POA
BELLA VISTA, AR

Visit Date: August 10, 2011 –Full Day Visit
Report Date: August 23, 2011

Present During Visit:

Casey Crittenden, Golf Course Maintenance Manager
Joint Advisory Golf Course Committee Members
Golf Course Superintendents
Bud White, Director, USGA Mid-Continent Region

Statement of Purpose: The purpose of the USGA Green Section is to assist subscribing courses in matters of agronomic management. All recommendations are offered free of bias, since the USGA has no connections or obligations to any manufacturer, supplier, or contractor. Additionally, since 'quick fixes' seldom result in permanent improvement, some of the recommendations in this report may not be easy to implement and it could take more than a single season to produce the desired results.



INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the USGA Green Section, it was a pleasure visiting the Bella Vista Village POA and assisting with your agronomic programs for golf course management. The following report will summarize topics discussed during the Turf Advisory Service visit on August 10, 2011 at your club. We appreciate your support of the TAS and hope you consider it a vital part of your maintenance program. Our unbiased recommendations are based on a continually up-to-date knowledge of trends in the industry and especially in your local region. It is this basis that makes the TAS so helpful and applicable to all levels of course maintenance.

Once again we are talking this year, as we did in last year, about an extreme summer and the difficulty the bentgrass greens had of surviving. As we discussed in the field and at our Town Hall meeting at the end, the greens at Bella Vista have fared fairly well with the summer stress considering the extreme heat of this summer, your greens construction as well as growing environment, and your rounds of play. Even though the heat has been excessive this summer, at least it has been a dry summer which makes managing the bentgrass during the summer stress a little easier.

GREENS

As mentioned above, the greens have fared quite well, and with a few exceptions have maintained a reasonable putting surface through this summer. We looked at a few of the weaker greens on some of the courses, but this was predominately due to bentgrass summer decline at the end of an extreme summer, which is very common across the South. The other factor, which we detailed quite a bit, was the need for increased fans for air circulation on many of the greens. Number 13 Dogwood is a prime example. TJ and Casey expressed that this green was declining fairly rapidly during the month of June and early July until the fan was installed and put into operation. Then from mid July until present, the green has actually recovered from some of the weakness and thinness. You saw the same improvement to #16 Dogwood from last year.

Number 15 Dogwood is another example of a green which would improve greatly from air flow from the southwest, which is the direction of your predominant air flow in the summer. This is to the left of the green and should be an area where underbrushing and raising of tree canopies are carried out. Additionally, if a fan is put to the left of the green, it should provide good coverage to all the green and have the most efficient use when placed to the southwest side of the green to utilize the prevailing southwest breeze as much as possible.

Research has shown we need a continual 3 mph. of air movement across the surface during the summer months to provide better health to the bentgrass. It dries the canopy better as well as moderates soil temperatures. In turn, this reduces the chance of disease and algae. Let me remind you of our discussions about budgeting a certain number of fans each year and trying to get fans to needed greens as rapidly as possible. I understand you have budgeted about four fans per year, but I suggest possibly budgeting eight fans per year for the next two to three years to try and catch up with improving some of the needed air flow. Maybe the box fans with oscillators from Grainger are an option in some cases.

Another point of discussion for greens management is the purchase of a PlanetAir machine for improved summer stress management by spiking. Below is a picture of this machine in operation on a bentgrass green in the Dallas area. On the day of this operation it reached 102°. Mind you, it was not this hot when the machine was being used. The operations occur early in the morning when temperatures are still moderate. My point is it can be used very successfully during summer stress for venting. I suggest you demo this unit in the fall if possible, and consider purchasing this machine for improved summer maintenance.





Another discussion about greens included recommended maintenance for the TifEagle bermudagrass. I think your aeration schedules and cutting heights are quite good, but I do suggest you begin the early summer with the carbide tip verticut blades at about 1/10" to 1/16" below the roller and use them every week to two weeks. If every week is excessive to be able to verticut, then you might consider verticutting in June every other week and then in July and August, alternating on a one week and then two week rotation. A light topdressing should accompany each verticut operation followed by brushing in the topdressing. The brush attachment with the mower is also a very good grooming practice for the ultradwarf bermudagrasses.

Your Rubigan program in the fall is also quite good for weed control, and then a touch of postemerge herbicide can be used in January in and around the green if needed.

I also agree with your thoughts of adding two or three more ultradwarf bermuda greens next year so your membership can better evaluate how they like the playing condition of the ultradwarfs and you can also evaluate how the ultradwarf does in your climate and fits your golfing operation. I suggest that ideally these greens be planted in mid-to-late June to provide the best planting and grow-in window for the greens.

I would like to make one last comment in terms of putting green considerations and remind you of the recommendation to expand the nursery putting greens on the courses. You currently only have three small nurseries for all the golf courses and the sodding and plugging necessary last fall completely used up your nursery stock. You are currently without any nursery grass and this is definitely a problem going into fall when some patchwork needs to be done on the greens. One alternative is to use a portion of the practice green to patch the greens on the course and then reseed and grow-in that portion of the putting green. This is not ideal, but at least it puts the seeded area all in one spot for grow-in instead of having several smaller seeded areas on the golf course greens when trying to grow them in and keep them in play.

The POA should definitely consider making funds available for development of at least a couple more nurseries this fall. The nurseries are not very expensive to build or establish as they do not have to be built to complete methods for putting greens. Often, an area is graded off with a 1% to 1 1/2% slope to one side. Then a lateral is put



on the lower side of the green and if the nursery is rectangular, often a lateral is put in the center as well. Then about 9” of your root zone mix is put in, firmed up, and seeded. You do not need a full 12” for the gravel bed for a nursery because it is not exposed to traffic or significant stresses. However, the nursery is maintained exactly as the putting greens, and then you should always have a readily available source of sod for patching and damage repair.

Another point of discussion for greens was the edging of the bermudagrass encroachment and trying to reduce the encroachment rate. I suggest that edging the greens be done as often as possible, and I realize this is dictated by your budget and available man hours. Edging, along with banding an application of Tupersan around the greens ‘edge in April and May and then again in September and October is the best approach in reducing bermudagrass infestation.

I would also like to commend your purchase of the Drill and Fill aeration equipment, and I explained in some detail the advantage that this machine will have on all the golf courses. The deep drill type of aeration from this machine can go 10” to 11” deep and inject the entire hole with sand. This is most helpful in improving the green profile by introducing a column of sand that allows better water management by improving older greens. It is a great compliment to conventional aeration and is done at the same time as a conventional aeration so the golfers only see one operation.

TEES

There was a mention about improving the divot repair on tees, and this is definitely a problem area for high play golf courses, but especially on tees that have quite a bit of shade on the bermudagrass. The one suggestion I would have is to try increasing the topdressing and the fertility of par 3’s or other particularly stressed teeing areas to maximize the growth as much as possible. It is not uncommon for golf courses in the South to have heavily played tees at a fertility rate of 10 lbs. N/1000 sq. ft./year to try and get as much growth and recovery as possible.

I also suggest you try Celebration bermudagrass on some of the more heavily worn tees as this bermudagrass has exhibited some better shade tolerance than other bermudagrasses, but it has also been very aggressive and successful in maintaining the best turf cover possible on heavy traffic tees. Prime examples would be the practice tee, par 3’s, or smaller regular men’s tees.



OTHER COMMENTS

We mentioned the shade tolerant bermudagrass which has been released as TifGrand, and it is one of the Tifton series of bermudagrasses. It has done quite well in a shadier environment.

Overseeding was discussed and I asked about plans to overseed the courses this year. I encourage the POA, as I have all courses this year in my region, that because of the drought courses are best off minimizing or eliminating overseeding as much as possible. Evaluating water available, drought stressed bermudagrass going into fall, cart damage from drought stress, and lack of soil moisture all contribute to winter damage of bermudagrass. Overseeding greatly adds to this as you are aware.

I also agree with your thoughts of trying to rotate cart traffic a little more during the winter on fairways to help golfers on the courses. The tight economy has certainly inspired clubs to do this more but we have to be careful of the potential increased damage in the drought conditions.

Let me again commend the POA for the installation of the new irrigation system on the Country Club Course. The improved irrigation coverage on this course versus the others has certainly been evident this summer. I encourage you to see the need for this upgrade throughout the golf courses and carry through with the replacement of the pump station and wet well on the Kingswood Course in 2012, then replacement of the system in 2013 as you proposed.

CLOSING

Besides providing agronomic advice that is unbiased and has no affiliation with any product or manufacturer, the USGA Green Section is the largest supporter of turfgrass research in the world. This research effort is helping to ensure the future of the game of golf and the industry of turfgrass maintenance and developing environmentally friendly grasses and maintenance practices for golf course maintenance of the future. The thrust of this research is to provide superior turfgrasses that provide better playability and are easier to maintain while ensuring golf courses remain positive influences on the environment. Your club's membership in the USGA and support of the Green Section helps make this research effort possible.

Bella Vista Village POA
August 23, 2011
Page 7



We invite you to visit our website at www.usga.org to learn more about Green Section programs and to stay up-to-date on activities in the Mid-Continent area via our Mid-Continent Regional Update which is changed every two weeks. A new program the USGA has developed is a “ Live Webcast” which covers various golf course maintenance topics as well as a variety of other related topics to the course or the game. This link can be found on the USGA homepage. An update of upcoming webcasts and a list of recorded ones can easily be searched and selected.

Please note that the online version of the Green Section RECORD is now available. You can sign up and receive the online version easily at <http://gsportal.usga.org>.

Thank you for your support of the USGA Green Section Turf Advisory Service. Please do not hesitate to call my office should you have any questions concerning this report or if Karen and I can help you in any other way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bud White". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Charles B. White, CPAg
Director, Mid-Continent Region

CBW:krw