

From The Fairways and Grounds – February 2010

I hope everyone is geared up for the 2010 Honda Classic. The maintenance staff appreciates your cooperation while we prepare The Champion course for some of the world's best golfers. I believe we have one of the most successful overseeding stands of Ryegrass this year. The weather was ideal at germination time, and a large percentage of seed came up uniformly. We are presently mowing the rough at 2.5" and the PGA Tour officials will make the final decision on the tournament rough height during advance week. The Tour also recommends the greens to roll 10'6" on the stimp meter during competition. At the present time, with the cold temperatures, the greens are running slightly faster.

The unusual cold weather we have been experiencing this winter has all but stopped the Bermuda grass growth across all courses. While that may be a positive by giving you slightly faster than normal green speeds, the fairways and roughs have suffered the consequences. We have peaked the fertility on all the courses, but we are still witnessing limited growth rates with the below average temps. We request your help in dispersing cart traffic patterns and refraining from driving around greens and tees. This is a critical time for traffic stress to the plant and will hinder recovery this spring. A simple rule of thumb that helps tremendously is simply not driving in the same pattern as your playing partners.

The turf (or lack there of) on the Haig driving range tee is a constant point of frustration for me as I'm sure it is for members. Agronomically we are busy assuring the area has all the right conditions for recovery. Naturally we add seed to the sand used to fill divots at this time of year. We also maximize fertility, however as anyone can see by simply looking at the tee surface we're struggling with a combination of low growth rate and increased range traffic at this time of year. The amount of traffic the ranges receive is certainly playing a role in the condition, but we will assure the teeing ground is poised for the longer daylight and warmer temps that are certainly right around the corner.

Operationally we are moving the teeing areas daily to provide better teeing surface, but again considering the amount of usage, the range tee is not large or deep enough. A minimum of 30 days recovery time is needed before we move the teeing area back to the front of the tee. We have 15-18 days per rotation from front to back - not enough time for the turf to heal properly.

Over the years of sanding in divots from range use, we have built up the tee some 2 feet of solid sand since original construction. The use of sand to heal in divots is necessary to grow a healthy driving range tee, but also brings into play many agronomic difficulties.

Jane and I are working towards enlarging the teeing area to provide the 30 days rotation we need and leveling the teeing area as well. We are also getting quotes for improved driving range mats that can be used on foul weather days.

Winter projects that are still going on are as follows:

- We are removing sand from the bunkers on the Squire and Estates courses to help playability. There are several bunkers where we are completely removing the sand, repairing the drainage, and adding the improved sand (such as that on the Palmer course) back into the bunker.
- We have trimmed trees on the Champions course and presently trimming trees on the Haig and Palmer.
- When the temperatures warm up we plan to renovate #8 fairway of the Haig.
- Linda, our Horticulturalist, has come up with an excellent annual color planting scheme for the bedding plants that I am sure all will be happy with this summer.

I hope you all get the opportunity to play the Champions course prior to the Honda Classic. Anytime you overseed Bermuda grass in the fall you have spring transition issues that must be dealt with in the summer. We have been feeding the Bermudagrass all winter keeping it healthy. When the Honda Classic is finished we will be slowing lowering the height of cut on the roughs to help sunlight get to the Bermuda grass – aiding in a gradual transition. Light verti-cutting on the tees and fairways will aid in thinning the Ryegrass as well. With these couple of maintenance cultural practices, water management, and an aggressive fertilizer program we plan to get back to Bermuda grass without notice.

I hope you all are enjoying reading articles submitted by my Superintendents. I am emphasizing communication and have set specific goals for each of them in 2010 to reinforce that critical piece of the puzzle. Until next time, I appreciate all your comments and suggestions. Thank you for all you do to help maintain the excellent tradition we have here at PGA National Resort and Spa.

For better turf,

John V. Andersen, CGCS
Director of Agronomy