

## **RANDOM THOUGHTS**

In August I dutifully submitted my Grass Clippings 16 to the office but unfortunately a gremlin got into the computer and hid my offering with the result that the offerings of my colleagues went out without anything for the green keepers.

Anyway GC16 will be published with the November edition and we will all have to wait till next year for GC17.

In the meantime some odd incidents have prompted me to share these random thoughts with you and give you something to think about during the Festive Season

### **Wrong Grass Wrong Place.**

I have, in the last year or so, become aware of instances where a GKP has re-planted bare areas with a grass which is not of the same variety as the existing grass on his green

Maybe he is just trying to see how the other grass reacts to the environment but, in practice, he has created a position where he has fast and slow patches on the green.

We are all aware of the fact that all grasses do not have the same growth habits and texture.

The management of the two is different and a bowl running over one might find more resistance than it would find running over the other.

In Australia they recognised this problem in 1963 and decreed that no State Competitions would be played on Multi-Strain greens (they call them Heinz greens )

Lately there have even been instances where nurserymen have deliberately supplied Gulf Green to clubs re-planting bare areas where there was no Gulf green before.

A few years ago a GKP planted Bayview on some large bare patches of what was predominately a Florida green.

The two grasses lived together in happy harmony until April/May when the Florida went into dormancy and the other one was still growing. The result was heavy patches of Bayview interspersed with faster patches of Florida. As the club was Headquarters for the SA Nationals the complaints streamed in and the green had to be taken out of the competition.

On another occasion a GKP killed off large patches of a weed and suddenly found he had large bare areas.

In his enthusiasm he asked a nurseryman to send him some grass sods to patch these bare areas.

Without asking the GKP what grass he had on the green the nurseryman sent large sods of Gulf Green (plus a bill for R3000) which were duly laid. When play could be resumed on that green the members quickly complained about the difference in weight over these patches and, in addition, the Gulf Green was growing at twice the speed of the other grass which, therefore, also created a management problem for the GKP.

In the end sanity was restored when the Gulf Green was removed and the patches re-planted with some plugs from the green itself – what the GKP should have done in the first place.

The moral of the story is – if you have to re-plant a portion of your green do so with what you have on the green.

More recently on two occasions Gulf Green was supplied to plug bare areas on greens earmarked for Major Championships. We were forced to have the Gulf green removed and replaced with the appropriate grass.

**Note** Our Green keepers are all amateurs and relatively inexperienced Surely they have a right to expect a nurseryman to give them sound advice.

### **New Grass. (Paspalum)**

A few years ago I planted Paspalum Vaginatatum (Country Club Grass) on my "C" green. Our Municipal water is very saline ( t.d.s up to 2800 ppm) and I decided that in view of the fact that many clubs might be faced by the prospect of having to use borehole water with a high salinity I should try it out at Kowie.

The planting has been a great success and some of our members actually prefer it to our Bayview greens.

Two weeks ago I had the opportunity to demonstrate the grass to the other members of the Bowls SA Greens Standing Committee – they were all impressed by the appearance colour, and speed – even when cutting at 5.0mm.

The draw is slightly different – the "less rigid " leaves bend easily with the result that the bowls runs straight for a while longer with a wider than usual draw. When the bowl starts turning it turns sharply.

Paspalum has a very high level of tolerance to saline conditions and has even been known to thrive in sea water.

It has a very soft leaf and which does **not** follow the sun – hence no Nap

When it was planted at Koeberg Power in the 80's they soon found that it had little resistance to other invasive grasses and it was abandoned eventually.

In order to counter this tendency I have regularly applied 50 Kgms of

Coarse salt every month. To date there has been no evidence of other grasses invading the green.

I would like to experiment a bit longer to confirm at what level of Electrical Conductivity foreign invasions are not a threat any more but, at this stage can say that any club faced with the problem of having to use borehole water with a high salinity should not be averse to planting Paspalum – especially the newer dwarf varieties.

### **Gulf Green**

I have noticed that a number of contractors are planting Gulf Green on bowling greens.

Gulf Green was "discovered" by my friend Bill Hadlow on the Scottburgh Golf Course. He asked me to look at the grass and we both decided that it had possibilities and sent it to Superlawn for evaluation. We all know now that it was a success on golf courses and sent it in large quantities to the Arabian Gulf – hence the name.

On a bowling green the problem has always been the speed of growth of which a large proportion is vertical –in contrast with the Cynodon Transvalensis which has an 80% lateral growth habit.

Two weeks ago at the meeting of our Bowls SA Greens standing Committee we decided that the jury was still out on the use of Gulf Green on a bowling green.

One of our considerations was the fact that it was not the easiest grass to manage and that we doubted whether our Green keepers in the RSA were equipped with the knowledge and experience to handle Gulf Green In addition we are not certain about it's resistance to fungal attacks and foreign grass invasions.

My advice to any club contemplating re-planting a green **Stick to a Local Indigenous variety unless none exists.**

We have not, as yet, discovered a grass which meets all the requirements for a bowling green – whatever we plant we will have to compromise somewhere.

### The Roller–Polisher

With the Roller–Polisher (RP) being manufactured in the RSA many more clubs have acquired this machine.

While I stand by my original assessment that it is worth its weight in gold a club must be certain that, in laying out almost R30,000.00 for such a machine their greens are ready for it. The RP is not a cure-all and will not –

- 1 Replace unsuitable soil.
  - 2 It will not replace ill-chosen grasses or fix a Heinz Green.
  - 3 It will not fix variations in the levels
- The club must realise that it is only if the problems mentioned above do not exist on their green that the RP comes into its own.

I have often been asked about the possibility of compaction–

The average greens mower exerts 1.9 to 2.0 kgm of weight /sq. cm

The large roller exerts 2.3 kgms / sq.cm.

A RP exerts 0.7 to 0.8 kgms /sq. cm

The pressure on a green is less than that of a greens Mower.

If, because you have a RP, you mow less often and roll before play then the compacting forces are not a problem.

I have used the RP since 1997 and my greens are no more compacted now than previously.

The direction of rolling has also been raised.

Early in the season when the green has been top-dressed and play has just

commenced you should vary the direction from N\_S , E-W and even diagonally to allow all the bumps to be eliminated

Normally we tend to roll in the direction of play but if there is a tendency to play more often in the one direction then the operator must make a point of rolling in the other direction **if the whole green is being used**

If you only intend playing on a few rinks then roll in that direction and leave the rest of the green.

Conclusion The RP does not re-make a green –

It eliminates bumps

it allows the Green keeper to save on leaf area by raising the mowing height without compromising the speed.

To all the Green keepers – Enjoy the festive season because a lot of planning lies ahead and by the time you have welcomed the New Year in the days will already be getting shorter.