



## Sample Country Club April 18, 2017

We know spring is a very important time for golf courses. It's no secret that it takes proper planning and hard work to "set the table" for a successful year. What we are doing now pays dividends when heading into the heat of the summer. Pre-emergent weed applications, aerification, fertilizer programs and pesticide applications are great examples of a strong agronomic foundation heading into golf season. It's no different with human resources. Setting up good training programs, setting expectations for staff, developing new employees and re-training tenured employees are all very important in setting a good tone for consistent course conditions throughout the year.

These early season visits are beneficial as they help set the bar for a new year. Last year was a difficult year for many markets and we know Mother Nature is not always going to be cooperative. After reflecting on programs and notes from 2016, we can now move toward a new target and achieving new goals and objectives. If there is one thing I have always enjoyed in being a Superintendent, it is that no two golf seasons are alike (no two work days are even alike). There is always change taking place. The key is taking the basic fundamentals and making sure they are implemented at the best time possible throughout the year. There will always be challenges with weather and this spring has been no different. While warm weather in late winter / early spring is great for golf and some early spring growth, this type of weather also brings on added weed pressure and turf recovery challenges with added play while turf is looking to come out of dormancy.

It was great visiting with Mr. Superintendent and his staff and I appreciate Mr. General Manager and Mr. Greens Committee Chair taking time out of their busy schedules as well. In touring the property, everyone's input was extremely valuable in gathering data and making recommendations for a successful season ahead. This property looked very different from the last visit (September of 2016). While last summer was one that threw a lot at Mr. Superintendent in mid-summer, the recovery process from stressed turf has shown great success and while there is always room for progress, course conditioning and turf recovery from last fall is certainly headed in a positive direction.

## Greens

- While the greens were still recovering last fall from a difficult summer, the overall turf coverage and conditioning during this visit was very good. The greens were lightly topdressed at time of visit (and approaches). The current fertility program (13-2-13 granular at aerification applied at .65 pound N and K per 1,000 sf) helps insure growth, recovery and a return to normal playing conditions as soon as possible. Overall the greens appear to be in much better shape than last fall and with continued discussions with Mr. Superintendent, I know the agronomic plans for 2017 will help these greens continue to progress.
  
- A common theme throughout many courses across the country this year is “early out of the gate”. What I mean by this is that many agronomic practices (cultural, irrigating, fertilizer and chemical applications, etc.) were started much earlier than in a “typical” year. These practices are typically based on scientific data such as growing degree day trackers and field observations. This is good data for timing key applications on the golf course. Other indicators include monitoring of soil temperatures. While the scientific data is important, other “natural” indicators such as forsythia blooming or poa annua going to seed in roughs are also important indicators that help time preventative spring applications. It is important to keep this in mind for a few reasons.....
  - Earlier applications often mean there will need to be more (supplemental) applications throughout the property.
  - With greens, we discussed the need for supplemental Primo / Proxy (herbicide for poa annua seed head control) applications. Typically in this market there are 2-3 applications made in spring for poa annua seed head control. Mr. Superintendent’s most recent application was the week of April 10. With weather still favoring seed head development we discussed adding another application (Proxy at 5 oz / 1,000 sf rate – Primo at 5 oz. / acre rate). Then starting the every 10-14 day growth regulation program (Legacy or Primo and Cutless) approximately 12 days after the next application.
  - **IMPORTANT.** Avoid using Sterol Inhibitor (DMI) fungicides during this time. DMI fungicides show properties of growth regulation and using DMI fungicides with growth regulators (Primo / Proxy / Cutless / Trimmit) has shown aggressive growth regulation of desired turf – especially during cooler weather of spring.
  - Poa annua seed head may be prevalent for the next few weeks. If after your next application of Proxy, you still are seeing pressure, we should discuss possibly one more application and a 3 oz. / 1,000 sf rate. Keep an eye on the seed head pressure and let’s keep working through the best approach based on how much pressure you are seeing.

- Pre-emergent weed control applications started earlier this year than normal. Green banks received fertilizer with Dimension herbicide. Will bring this up a few times, but monitoring and preparing for a possible supplemental weed control application is very important, as is being prepared for post emergent weed control early on. This is very important with many weeds, especially some of the grassy weeds and sedges. We know that once these weeds germinate there is much better post emergent control when applied sooner rather than later. Have post emergent herbicides (such as Quinclorac / Drive) ready to go in late May or June is important.
- Take All Patch was problematic on these greens last summer. Mr. Superintendent has been diligent about a preventative approach to this disease. As discussed last fall, soil temperatures are a key indicator and we know soil temperatures warmed up quick this spring. With this in mind, an extra application of a Strobilurin fungicide may be beneficial this spring. Good job by Mr. Superintendent in making his applications for Take All Patch in the fall and now the Strobilurin based fungicides this spring. Applications of Heritage and Insignia fungicides have been made this spring. The following key bullet points are taking place for Take All and were included in the fall report.
  - Fall applications made when soil temperatures are 55-60 degrees at a 2" depth.
  - Spring applications made when soil temperatures are 55 degrees or greater for 5-7 days. Two – Three applications may be necessary at approximate 3 to 4 week intervals.
  - DMI fungicides (i.e. Propiconazole / Banner Maxx) are effective. This is preferred as a fall application as DMI fungicides can act as growth regulators and high rates (2 oz. per 1,000 sf of Propiconazole for Take All Patch) can inhibit spring growth / green up. Spring applications we recommend QoI fungicides (sterol inhibitors such as Insignia).
  - Solid tine aerifying (venting) greens 1-2 days prior to fungicide applications is beneficial as it helps product move into thatch layer where disease is taking place.
  - Irrigating / watering product into thatch layer will help. Most fungicides recommend applying their product in 2-5 gallons of water per 1,000 sf so it is important to get product moved into thatch. Very important.
  - Use of Ammonium Sulfate fertilizers will help keep pH reduced. Disease is less active in soils with pH of 6 or lower.
  - Drought and heat stress will elevate symptoms so really important to have healthy turf going into heat of summer.
- We talked about poa annua seed head control earlier. It is important to discuss poa annua in general as well. The early spring and consistent moderate temperatures over the past couple months have provided a great growing environment for poa annua. This has been noticed throughout the course (greens, tees, fairways and roughs). We know poa is a plant that is very susceptible to disease and other stress. All the more reason to make sure to be proactive with fungicide and fertilizer applications on greens and green surrounds from now through fall.



*Turf coverage has improved throughout the course – poa annua management is really important*



*Examples of what green surrounds looked like in fall of 2016 – MUCH improved this spring – but much of the recovery is poa annua*

- Green surrounds have shown improvement. The turf coverage is much better, but it is still important to note that the turf types are various and present challenges with playability and maintenance. It was great to see how much turf recovery came in from seeding and sodding last fall. In looking at these areas, we know that sodding is a preferred method of recovery as it gives a good mono-stand of turf that helps crowd out any weed (and poa) pressure. This is not surprising as we know that while seeding is a great practice, there are still voids that will become contaminated with poa. The key is to keep moving the good turf in a positive direction (supplemental seeding, fertility, etc.), while looking into decreasing / suppressing poa annua. I want to bring this up because while the turf recovery is much improved in greens surrounds, the sodded areas are far superior. As we went through the property, Mr. General Manager brought his clubs and we looked at the effect various turf types have on ball lie. While it may not be realistic from a monetary point of view, it is good conversation to discuss potential sodding of key green surround areas for improved turf health and playability. The pictures below show the contrast of sodded surround vs. a surround with various turf types.



*While green surrounds have better turf coverage, the sodded areas (picture on left) are much better for playability and overall turf consistency.*

- Some other key notes on greens at this club....
  - The two new lightweight greens rollers are a nice addition in providing great turf quality and consistent green speeds (suggested using old roller for clay tennis courts and improving their consistency).
  - Continued venting / solid tine aerification throughout the summer will help with overall turf health.
  - Keeping the master plan in mind, if and when any renovation is done, sodding around greens is highly recommended (vs. seeding due to irrigation limitations) for improved consistency of turf and poa annua control.
  - Keeping the master plan in mind, adding some part circle perimeter heads in areas that historically struggle will help green surrounds turf quality. Should start planning which areas are a priority and address this fall as needed *prior to* any seeding or sodding.
  - Great job of water management so far by Mr. Superintendent and staff. Less use of overheads and more hand-watering / use of wetting agents or surfactants help with overall turf health on greens. Over watering will always result in compromised turf health.
  - I cannot emphasize enough how important managing green surrounds is. With various turf types, band spraying with fungicides throughout the summer, using turning boards when mowing during times of stress, micromanaging fertility (supplemental applications in weak areas), and occasional aerification / venting will help improve probability of maintaining consistent turf. Also need to micro-manage water throughout the summer. Mr. Superintendent is doing a good job of managing overhead watering on greens, but supplemental watering may need to take place on green banks when stressed. Once again keeping the master plan in mind, we need to keep discussing ways to incorporate good part circle perimeter heads to help protect green banks.
  - Use of turning boards sooner rather than later to help protect collars and green surrounds.
  
- Grass naturally wants to grow in the spring. We have seen how a difficult summer can impact these turf types and being proactive with a strong plan this spring is imperative for better turf throughout the summer.



*Good plans in place will reduce the probability of experiencing poor turf experienced in various areas that we saw back in 2016. Above pictures are from last fall.*

### **Tees / Fairways**

- With the mild winter and nice spring, the zoysia grass on tees and fairways looks pretty good. Mr. Superintendent has recently sprayed (last week) for any zoysia patch or “large patch”. Overall the zoysia has come through dormancy (what little there was this year) in good health.
- It is important to note the various areas of poa annua mixed in among the zoysia tees and fairways. This would normally be treated in late winter (typically January or February) with roundup herbicide before the zoysia and warm season turf starts to break dormancy. With the very mild weather early this year, superintendents throughout various markets did not get the chance to spray out poa with roundup (or other non-selective herbicide) as desirable warm season turf (zoysia fairways and tees) were breaking dormancy early and damage to the zoysia could occur.
- A good control for poa annua now would be Katana herbicide (3 oz / acre rate) or Negate ( 1.5 oz / acre rate ). Both of these products will show great results in poa annua reduction. It is important to make sure when using either of these products to control sprays to the zoysia grass only and not to get any on your cool season or mixed variety rough as cools season grasses are not tolerant to these herbicides. Application to fairways is easier than to tees as the tees are a tight space with good cool season turf surrounds. If applying to tees be extra careful and consider using a spray hawk if possible. Mr. Superintendent said he is more familiar with Katana and I am including the Negate product label along with this report.



Negate Herbicide Label.pdf



*Poa annua in zoysia can be reduced with herbicide applications*

- Based on what we saw last fall and in talking with Mr. Superintendent, sedge pressure can be an issue in the zoysia grass (especially after extended periods of warm / moist weather). The key with controlling sedges is treating early and often. Once they reach the nutlet or seeding stage, they can be quite problematic. Use of Dismiss herbicide at a rate of 4 – 8 oz / acre has proven effective, but needs to be part of a regular program (consistent applications every 2-4 weeks). Starting early with applications is important. If applications do not start until weeds are more mature they are certainly more difficult to control.
- While the course had been experiencing some wet weather prior to time of visit, Mr. Superintendent and staff were doing a good job at keeping up with mowing. The fairways had recently been cut and quality of cut appears to be very good. It was noted last year and we all discussed again “tightening up” fairway mowing heights. There is no doubt current heights are helping provide a consistent stand of turf throughout the property. Now that you have a great mechanic on board who can insure good quality of cut (proper reel adjustments, etc.) keep lowering heights and get to a point where the height of cut meets the standard for the majority of players at the club. I feel very comfortable recommending getting heights to ½” (0.5”). This is a good height for transition zone zoysia fairways. This height helps with ball roll (driving distance) of fairways and also provides an upright but tight lie for good playability. Work with Mr. General Manager and the pro-shop for feedback as you tweak mowing heights, but I do believe ½” is a good target to get to this spring and then adjust up from that in very slight increments if necessary.
- The intermediate cut and greens surround cuts you are doing look great. The equipment technician was trying out lower heights on day of the visit and will continue tweaking to get to a perfect balance in height for playability and general turf health. Mr. Equipment Technician has been a great asset to the operation and with his help, mowing heights throughout the course can continue to adjust to create the best playability and turf health.

- Number 8 fairway continues to be a challenge. The soils are very compact and do not drain well making cart traffic and overall health of turf difficult to manage. If the long range plan for course renovation work does not take place soon, there should be discussion of aggressive topdressing to keep incorporating as much sand into this profile as possible. Easily noticed when comparing soil samples from other fairway areas.



*Plugs on left from #8 fairway vs. plug on right from #12 fairway.*

### **Bunkers / Roughs**

- Great job with bunker work during the off season. The exposed bunker liners have been a priority for Mr. Superintendent and his staff and they have really done a great job getting the bunkers more presentable (and playable) by reducing the amount of exposed bunker liners. There are still a couple of bunkers to address (i.e. green side on #8), but most of the problematic bunkers have been addressed. Nice work.
- With the wet weather and good growing conditions of spring, bunker faces have been growing fast. Mr. Superintendent is working to get them “fly mowed” and trimmed around and they will be more manageable as growing slows. We did discuss applying Primo (Trinexapa-Ethyl) or other growth regulator to help reduce mowing frequencies and keep a clean / tight turf canopy. Applying a generic version of Trinexapac-Ethyl (i.e. T-Nex) at a rate of 20 oz / acre once a month May – September is a great way to cut back on mowing and trimming of bunkers. It DOES NOT ELIMINATE the need for maintenance, but does reduce the frequencies. Yes there is cost associated with purchasing the product and it does take time to apply, but it does help create consistency with mowing. Another best practice is tank mixing the growth regulator with some 2-4D or other post emergent weed control product to insure a clean stand of turf around bunkers.



*Use of growth regulators can help reduce mowing frequencies and labor needed to maintain bunkers.*

- Roughs are much healthier this spring than we saw in the fall. We already talked about how the green surrounds have improved, but the overall seeding that took place last fall throughout all rough areas has been helpful. It is important to note that while seeding has helped improve these areas, there are still many areas with poa annua, bent grass and various turf types that do not do as well in the summer. Continuing to seed, spray, fertilize and irrigate these areas is very important. Also micro managing heavy traffic (walk up areas, etc.) with supplemental aerification and fertility will help insure better turf quality throughout the heat of the summer. I believe the club spent around \$12,000 in seed last year for rough improvements. It may make sense to look at utilizing some of this number for more sod work around green complexes. Just a thought, but it is good to see money budgeted for continued rough improvements.
- While the roughs are healthy, they are growing fast with spring weather. We looked at rough that was freshly mown at 2.5" and at that height it looks pretty good with a fresh cut. During spring growing it can get pretty tall quickly at this height. You should consider mowing at 2.0" during the spring and then monitor turf health through the summer and adjust as needed. The key is what makes the most sense for membership experience while balancing turf health. I am confident you can maintain good rough at 2.0" during the spring, but if that is the height that is best for playability, it should be communicated that heights may need adjusted up if heat, lack of irrigation, etc. start to impact turf health at that height.

- The native or no-mow areas that have been mowed down look great. We know that no-mow areas are not maintenance free areas and they can be even more maintenance (spraying, etc.) than if you were to maintain at typical rough height. Mr. Superintendent and staff have done a great job “re-claiming” some of these native areas (i.e. between 6 and 7). There may be some supplemental herbicide applications needed, but keeping these areas mowed down will help with pace of play and overall aesthetics of the course. Really nice job!
- Keep working with Mr. Golf Pro and Mr. General Manager to identify other areas that may benefit from this (perhaps left of 4?). Anyway – the work you have done is really a nice improvement.



*Native or no-mow areas that you have started to maintain or “reclaim” look great.*

### **Driving Range / Clubhouse / Other**

- Thanks to Mr. Greens Committee Char and Mr. Superintendent for sharing the proposed master plan from Mr. Architect. We know the challenges faced with a smaller practice area. As the club explores this more and decides how much of the master plan will be implemented we can then discuss the best short and long term plans for the driving range and other areas of the property. For now the overall turf health and appearance of the practice area is very good.
- There have been some nice improvements around the clubhouse. Mr. Superintendent has done a good job focusing on improving the first impression and details throughout the course. It is good to see he has hired someone to focus as a landscaper. We know that details make a difference and Sample Country Club will progress to another level as details like curb appeal and landscape beds become more consistent. I am confident Mr. Superintendent is on a good path to progress and sustainability. Other good examples of detail work include the fence repair behind 2 green, landscape bed improvements on 5 tee and 13 tee, cleaner appearance around pond on 12 / 17.



*Improved focus on landscape this year is already starting to show.*

- There has been some really good improvement and great momentum heading into season. While there has been incremental progress from when I visited last fall, there are still great opportunities ahead to take Sample CC to another level. Mr. Superintendent has built a good foundation (well-staffed, key positions filled such as landscaper and equipment technician, good agronomy plans in place, etc.). Some key focal areas for this spring in preparing for the heat of the summer include....
  - Continuous training with staff. Mr. Superintendent has great golf course maintenance knowledge and the ability to provide quality turf and conditioning. Training and development of people is a key focus for all successful businesses and is no different with golf course maintenance. As starting wages and minimum wages continue to elevate and labor pools decline, it is more and more important to continue training and developing good people. We usually do a good job of initial training in golf course maintenance, but really need to focus on continuous training. This should be done daily. Recognizing and rewarding good performance as well as identifying areas where more consistency is needed is a culture. Discipline is not a negative part of managing employees, it is a key piece to development and growing as a team. As Mr. Superintendent grows in his role, I know he will continue developing his own skills as well as those of his staff. Great foundation and staff in place. Keep training and developing and there will be continued progress.
  - Continue communicating job descriptions and expectations among your staff now that you are filling key positions. Daily communication is the key. In observing how well Mr. Superintendent and the rest of the staff interact with each other, I know that as daily expectations are communicated this team will continue progressing as they deliver consistent conditions.
  - Mr. General Manager mentioned a statement for Sample Country Club of “Perfect Everyday”. There is no doubt that with this team Mr. Superintendent can achieve this. Yes Mother Nature can throw us curve balls, but I know that with the continued focus on detail work and delivering consistent conditions, there are great things ahead for Sample Country Club.

Thanks again to Mr. Superintendent, Mr. General Manager, Mr. Greens Committee Chairman and the entire staff for their time and input throughout the day. I am really impressed with the progress made from last fall. There is a great foundation in place this spring (staffing, agronomy plans, etc.) that will pay dividends for a consistent golf course throughout the upcoming season.

As more details develop regarding the master plan I look forward to helping Mr. Superintendent and all at Sample Country Club continue planning for great success ahead.

Thanks and as always – please call anytime.

Steve

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