

Recovering Our Greens After Overseeding

By: Wayne Slaton, Golf Course Superintendent

Our greens are now 37 years old this month. We have been overseeding our greens every year for the last 23 years. The transition from the winter overseed to our base turf, Tif-Dwarf, continues to be a challenge here in Central Texas, especially with this year's weather pattern. The weather here is always variable, and we adjust our greenskeeping practices the best we can to keep our greens rolling smooth. Often, golfers do not understand that transition is the stress removal of the winter overseeded turf for the base turf of hybrid Bermudagrass Tif-Dwarf to grow and fill back in where the overseed was. The transition is going to take time and a little look of tan/yellowing. This is where vertical cutting, topdressing, fertilizer applications, and solid tine cultural practices are very important before the consistent 95° plus temperatures arrive.

Some of our area golf courses have older varieties of greens like we do, or even the newest turf types, and decide to overseed them for winter/spring play, we all have the challenge of spring to summer transitions. You might ask, what is the overseeded greens transition? When nighttime temperatures remain above 60° for several days in the spring and soil temperature reaches 65° at the 4-inch depth, you will see green-up and recovery of Bermudagrass begin. The grass makes rapid recovery in the spring by producing new shoots from the nodes of previously dormant stolon's and rhizomes. Our greens here at Crystal Falls are overseeded with poa trivialis each fall and when the temperatures reach over 90° our overseeded greens will show signs of stress with a browning color. That color is from dying poa trivialis, winter grass that cannot survive the summer heat. Many ask, "what is wrong with the greens?" We do everything we can to promote growth of the base Bermudagrass Tif-Dwarf summer grass and a rapid exit of the winter overseed.

For example, as the stress to the overseed (cool season turf) shows with a tan/yellowing look, the Tif-Dwarf (warm season turf) will grow in place of the overseeded areas of the greens. It is a lost art, and sometimes central Texas weather can give you more of a challenge than you are ready for. With our variety of greens here having Tif-Dwarf hybrid Bermudagrass, it is highly recommended to overseed them for a few reasons. 1) Controlling putting speed with the severity of our green's slope. 2) Fall/Winter/Spring play traffic wear tolerance and smoothness. 3) Green color and aesthetics throughout the winter months. It would be easy to say not to overseed our greens, but I fear by March we might not have anything to putt on because of the volume of rounds of golf played here at +60,000. Remember that dormant Bermudagrass turf can only take traffic for so long and it does not start to recover until April/May. With the age of our greens, it will become more challenging every year to have a smooth transition. Shaded parts of our greens on the back left of 6, left side of 9,10,12, front left of 13 will be slower to recover as well. We will continue to do all we can to promote growth in these areas as you will see us on the Golf Course Maintenance team solid tine, topdress, fertilize, and hand water these areas.

Examples of the last 3 years. #9 green overseed below.



#9 Green overseed gone below.



#9 Growing back the Tif-Dwarf warm season turf below.



Growth and Tif-Dwarf healing below.



The recent rains have been a good thing, yet some of the last few sessions of 6 plus inches of rain have the water crossings impassable causing us to close a few days to allow the rainwater to drain, and some debris for the golf course maintenance team to clean up before we could open. Our core green aeration was done just in between those last few big rain events in the first few weeks of June. Our cool season overseed on the greens during the aeration did not survive the stress of the heavy topdressing to fill our core holes and our current state of the greens is keeping our base turf of Tif-Dwarf “growing together.” We will be regularly topdressing with sand to continue to smooth the core aeration holes over along with rolling as the warm season turf continues to heal. If you have not had a chance to check the turf on the green at the driving range practice area, please do. You may recall that was most recently installed and it looks like a great choice for the future of turfgrass, it looks amazing and plays well also. The driving range putting green turf variety is called Platinum TE Paspalum. It takes much less fertilizer once established, handles some shade stress, and does not have transition problems like our current greens on the golf course. It is a great turf grass selection when we get the chance to update the current turf on our greens.

Hope this has been educational and look forward to see you on our course soon!