

## Summer Turf Management At Moon Valley



Checking fertilizer injector are Director of Golf Bill Garrett and Superintendent Calvin Cross.

When temperatures hit the 100-degree mark at Moon Valley in June, superintendent Calvin Cross implements a summer management program.

For the next four months, his crew is on constant alert for signs of heat stress.

"You expect the greens to look great in March," says Cross, "but you're lucky if they look half that good in September. By making some adjustments in our maintenance practices, we've been able to keep that spring look throughout the summer."

The first step is to assign two of his crew to hosing the greens. From the moment they arrive at the course in the morning until they go home at night, they travel from green to green, looking for dry spots and syringing. "Once bentgrass starts to wilt, it's too late," Cross points out. "You need to check the greens almost every hour to be safe."

Cross used to raise the cutting height on the walk-behind greensmowers to 3/16 inch in the summer. He has found that by alternating between the brushes on his Bunton greensmowers and the groomer on his Jacobsens from November to May, he can keep the height at 5/32 inch year-round without harm. He points out that neither the brushes nor the groomers are used during the summer. Each day the greens are mowed in a different direction.

Topdressing and aerification are not allowed during the summer. At the first sign of brown patch, Fore is applied to the greens with a walk-behind boom sprayer. "You have to overwater to a certain extent," says Cross. "Fore also helps prevent black

algae in our sand greens."

Fertility is the other area Cross guards closely. Since nitrogen will leach from the sand greens, he used to apply 1/4 to 1/2 pound of ammonium sulfate per month during the summer. Now his last application of granular fertilizer is in May. During the summer he injects minute amounts of "activated" nitrogen and potassium into the irrigation system. "By knowing the ET and watering less, we lose less nitrogen to leaching," he says. "We also test the tissue during the summer to stay on top of any nutrient problems." During the rest of the year, he applies Lesco 15-0-15 SCU to keep the phosphorus low, primarily to prevent *Poa annua* from getting established. No more than 1/2 pound of nitrogen is applied per month.

The trick to maintaining the common bermudagrass, explains Cross, is finding the right height and keeping it there. The roughs are mowed at 1 1/2 inch twice a week with a seven-gang Toro Parkmaster. The fairways are cut daily with Jacobsen LF-100s at 7/16 inch. He has had little trouble with spring transition from ryegrass to bermuda on the fairways and green banks by mowing at this height.

"Our fairways looked better than some other courses' greens this summer," boasts Cross. "The members play even when the temperature goes over 110 degrees! We've come a long way in five years."

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