

Let's Make a Deal: Overseed or No Overseed?

The GREEN alternative that resort golf facilities should consider.

BY PATRICK O'BRIEN

Chances are that if I begin this memorandum with an admonition to "just say no" to fairway overseeding, you would rapidly push it into the giant recycle bin in cyberspace. So instead, let's make a deal. I will not tell you not to overseed if you promise to take a short four-question quiz. Don't worry, everyone will pass. Think of this as a diagnostic test. Your answers will indicate whether you are a candidate for a new type of winter fairway management program that costs less and requires fewer inputs. Do we have a deal?

Given that resort golf facilities have vested interest in filling tee sheets as full as possible from October through April, there is a premium on customer satisfaction. Therefore, we will call this the "The Customer-Comes-First Quiz." Answering these questions will assist you in making sure your customer is satisfied.

THE CUSTOMER-COMES-FIRST QUIZ

In the table below, circle (mentally) the characteristic you believe your customers prefer for fairway soil moisture, ball roll, golf cart usage, and turf color. This shouldn't take long.

| Fairway Conditions | Mystery Program X | Mystery Program Y |
|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Soil Moisture | Wet | Dry |
| Ball Roll | Minimal | Moderate to Maximum |
| Golf Cart Usage | Restrictions | No Restrictions |
| Turf Color | Green | Green |

INTERPRETING THE RESULTS

With your answers circled, look at the table below with the mystery programs revealed. Surprised with your selection? Most are surprised that they prefer conditions associated with a turf colorant program because the emphasis with overseeding has traditionally focused on spring golf conditions. Frequently, resort operators do not consider the negative impacts that overseeding has on golfers in autumn and early winter. Traditionally great bermudagrass conditions are compromised by trying to establish a new stand of turf on a dormant one. As a regular visitor each November to a popular coastal area loaded with golf destinations, my heart sinks when the starter informs me of cart restrictions, limited ball roll, and wet fairways because of the need to grow young ryegrass seedlings in preparation for green fairways in the spring.



| Fairway Conditions | Overseeding | Turf Colorant |
|--------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Soil Moisture | Wet | Dry |
| Ball Roll | Minimal | Moderate to Maximum |
| Golf Cart Usage | Restrictions | No Restrictions |
| Turf Color | Green | Green |

THE BONUS

As a resort owner, you have considerable knowledge about the financial implications of everything done on the golf course. If your answers above indicate that your golfers prefer playing conditions in the fall that can be achieved with a turf colorant program, we are pleased to report that there are multiple profitable ripple effects, some of which are summarized below.

| Fairway Conditions | Overseeding | Turf Colorant |
|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Cost | More \$\$\$ | Less \$\$\$ |
| Water | More water used | Less water used |
| Fertilizer | More fertilizer used | Less fertilizer used |
| Mowing | More mowing | Less mowing |
| Pesticides | More pesticides used | Less pesticides used |
| Bermudagrass Health | Variable | More predictable |

DEAL OR NO DEAL

The move to replace traditional overseeding is one that has significant financial and playability implications. However, a new approach will not be adopted unless it provides customers with a golf experience that is equal to or better than traditional overseeding. Therefore, resort owners are encouraged to visit golf facilities that have already made the switch to turf colorants. If this concept is new to you, gain background information of fairway turf colorant programs by reading [Instant Overseeding: Coming to a Fairway Near You](#).

Traditional fairway management practices are changing, and the switch to a turf colorant program just might be a great deal for you.

[PATRICK O'BRIEN](#) is director of the USGA Green Section's Southeast Region in Griffin, Ga. Patrick adores playing at resort golf courses with green fairways . . . even better when there are no cart restrictions and plenty of ball roll.



Is this fairway green because of a turf colorant or overseeding? It is difficult to tell.