

Southeast Region

Paspalum: Big Advances are Making Golf More Fun

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New turfgrasses are changing the golf experience today. Turfgrass breeders have exerted more influence on the game of golf over the past 10 years than any other aspect of turfgrass management. The impact of one of these new turfgrasses, Sea Dwarf paspalum, was studied on a tour of both the Parkland Golf Club and Old Palm Club in the Fort Lauderdale, FL area earlier this winter. Sea Dwarf was planted wall to wall on both golf courses and these facilities definitely have the "WOW" factor.

Plant it Everywhere

Sea Dwarf is the only dwarf-type paspalum variety and is well adapted as a golf turf on all playing areas. It tolerates a wide range of mowing heights as do all commercial paspalum varieties. It is not uncommon to find the same paspalum variety planted on all parts of the golf course. Sea Dwarf tolerates a wide range of irrigation water quality, too.



Dr. Paul Raymer at the University of Georgia continues to work on the development of more salt tolerant and disease resistant paspalum varieties for the future.

The quality of the Sea Dwarf putting surfaces was impressive. Green speeds are typically 9 feet or higher and the surfaces are smooth and true. The mowing height is 0.125 inch at most times. On special occasions, double mowing and rolling are used to enhance putting quality. New mowing technology with electric reels and magnetic bedknives are used, too.

Grain and surface smoothness were not issues at these greens due to excellent management.

Surface firmness was superb without any noticeable ball marks. Deep root activity to a depth of six to eight inches on the high sand

rootzones was evident, as well as rhizome development to a depth of three inches. A few fairy rings were the only disease activity noted at this time on the putting greens. Preventative fungicides are applied, but only during the cooler months.

The Sea Dwarf paspalum on the tees, fairways, and rough also provided an extremely high quality playing surface. Fairway mower stripping offers a unique "wow factor" compared to traditional bermudagrass. Dollar spot and brown patch activity were seen on the tees and fairways. Disease pressure is higher where soil moisture retention is higher. Preventative fungicides were applied routinely in the cooler months at these sites. New air induction spray nozzle technology was observed on the sprayers to allow applications even during most windy times, a big plus. Bermudagrass contamination is the single biggest issue as no selective chemical control exists at this time to remove it from paspalum.

Conclusion

Paspalum is one of the many new grasses having an impact in the south. Turfgrass breeders, like Dr. Paul Raymer at the University of Georgia – Griffin Station, are working to develop even more disease and salt resistant varieties of paspalum. A graduate assistant also will be hired soon at the University of Florida to work with Dr. Phil Harmon, a noted plant pathologist, to study existing disease issues. The USGA Research Program helps with paspalum funding at both universities. Stay tuned for new updates on this important new turfgrass for the SE Region.

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