

Turf Advisory Service ON-SITE VISIT REPORT



Lookout Mountain Golf Club Lookout Mountain, GA

Visit Date:
April 16, 2013

Present:
Billy Buchanan, General Manager
Lookout Mountain Board of Directors
Mark Stovall, Superintendent
Chris Hartwiger, USGA Green Section

United States Golf Association

Chris Hartwiger, Senior Agronomist | Green Section | Southeast Region
1097 Highlands Dr. | Birmingham, AL, 35244 | Phone 205-444-5079 | Fax 205-444-9561 | chartwiger@usga.org

USGA Green Section Mission: The USGA Green Section are leaders in developing and disseminating agronomically, environmentally, and economically sustainable management practices. We help golf facilities maintain better playing conditions for better golf through science-based and practical solutions.

On behalf of the USGA Green Section, it was a pleasure to return to Lookout Mountain to discuss the golf course maintenance program. This visit consisted of a tour of the golf course with Mr. Mark Stovall followed by attendance at a Lookout Mountain Boards of Directors meeting. The main topics of discussion from the visit will be summarized in this report. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or comments after reviewing this report.

THE GOLF ECONOMY AND LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN

The National Golf Foundation's statistics show that in 1990 there were approximately 27.4 million golfers and at the end of 2010 there were 26.1 million golfers (Source: Source: Yasuda, Gene. "Golf answers urgent call", Golfweek, January 27, 2012.

Source: <http://www.golfcourseindustry.com/gci-031512-2011-course-closures-ngf.aspx>. Over this time, the number of golf courses has increased by approximately 30%. In 2012, there was a net closing of another 140 golf courses.

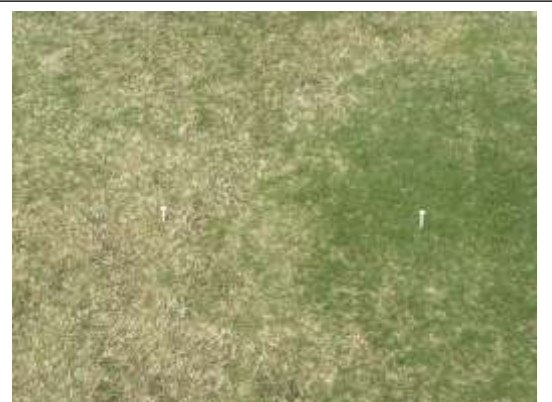
My observation in the Southeast is that both daily fee and private clubs continue to struggle in this environment for multiple reasons. On the private club side, increases in dues have greatly outpaced the rate of inflation. Appendix A shows a list of annual dues at 50 top private courses across the country as published in a 1974 issue of Golf Digest. To convert these numbers to 2013 dollars, multiply by 4.72. You will notice that dues at all of these private clubs are much higher than the number adjusted for inflation.

There are several economic issues facing Lookout Mountain. The golf course maintenance budget is basically the same as it was in 2005. However, the allocations within the budget in 2013 are much different. For example, gasoline, insurance, fertilizer, and health insurance are all much higher. Therefore, Lookout Mountain must continue to seek ways to reduce tasks done on the golf course and communicate the changes to the golfer. Additionally, the club has fallen behind on equipment replacement. This topic will be reviewed in the next section.

FAIRWAYS AND ROUGH

Observations

1. March of 2013 was the 7th coldest March in Chattanooga history and differed dramatically from 2012, the warmest March in history. As a result, green up has been slow, but it is coming along day by day now. The benefit of a late green up is lower mowing and fuel costs, especially compared to 2012.
2. As previous reports have stated, the areas of common bermudagrass in the fairways and rough will be much slower



Picture 1: The common bermudagrass on the left is much coarser textured and slower to green up than the finer textured hybrid bermudagrass on the right. The majority of the rough is common bermudagrass.

to green up and produce a desired playing surface than Tifway bermudagrass. A picture of the difference between common and Tifway bermudagrass is included to the right.

3. A question was raised about the mowing height of rough during the season was discussed.
4. The preemergence herbicide Specticle was used on much of the golf course with excellent results.

Recommendations

1. Continue to use the Specticle as your base fall/winter/early spring preemergence herbicide.
2. Remember that the common bermudagrass will take much longer to green up than the Tifway.
3. A moderate rough mowing height is advised for the 2013 season. My preference for common bermudagrass rough is 1 ½ inches. The taller the rough, the more difficult the golf experience will be, particularly if summer rains are regular. Rough that gets too difficult will be enjoyable only for the most skilled players. We are in a time when recruiting members is important and it is necessary to remember that 87% of the male golfers in the USGA GHIN (Handicap) System have a handicap greater than 7. 89% of women in the GHIN System have handicaps of 15.9 or higher.

PUTTING GREENS

Observations

1. The staff recently completed core aeration and filling the aeration holes. Everything went well with this procedure.
2. We spent a good amount of time discussing ultradwarf bermudagrasses during the Board meeting and what is occurring in the region. As you know, The Honors Course is one of the latest courses to announce that they will be converting from creeping bentgrass to an ultradwarf bermudagrass.

Recommendations

1. Below are links several articles that review why these grasses are gaining a foothold in the recommendations. [O'Brien A Time To Change Ultradwarf Article](#) , [Hartwiger Heat Is On Ultradwarf Article](#) .
2. I encourage all Board members to go out and play golf on ultradwarfs that are being maintained at a high level on courses such as The Farm, Council Fire, and The Honors Course. Eventually your members will begin asking questions about the ultradwarf and whether they are appropriate at Lookout Mountain. It is best to be prepared in advance for these questions.
3. Normally, I do not recommend installing a demonstration green, but the Oehmig practice facility would be ideal to install an ultradwarf. Your numbers are going to be playing on ultradwarfs in the city and throughout the region. Providing an

ultradwarf surface for practice would be beneficial for their golf games. It would also give your staff the opportunity to manage these grasses up on Lookout Mountain.

4. A final consideration for the use of ultradwarf putting greens at Lookout Mountain is the ability to recapture lost putting green around the edges of the greens without completely rebuilding them. The ultradwarfs will perform well on a heavier soil and are less susceptible to high temperature issues. This type of renovation would last approximately 50 to 60 days and excluding any changes to the irrigation, the ball park cost would \$100,000 to \$125, 000.

PRACTICE TEE

Observations

1. The turf quality on the practice tee does not meet expectations. The issue on the practice tee is not an agronomy problem, but an infrastructure problem. Simply put, the grass can't heal fast enough to support the desired practice activities of the members. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but it affirms that people enjoy practicing.
2. Options for improvement were reviewed.



Picture 2: The driving range is well used, but unfortunately the bermudagrass cannot recover as fast as it is worn down.

Recommendations

1. The first step in improving this tee is to come to a consensus on the desired quality of bermudagrass whenever a golfer practices on the grass on the tee.
2. Once this is established, a plan relying more heavily on the artificial surfaces is necessary. If the club would like the upper tee to provide an experience similar to a Lookout Mountain fairway, the grass tee will need to be closed beginning around Labor Day and reopened sometime in May to early June. Enclosed is a link to an article to help teach and membership how to maximize tee space. [Practice Like a Pro](#) .
3. There was some concern that the artificial surfaces may not be as functional and visually appealing as desired. I encourage one or more of you to attend the PGA Merchandise show to investigate the myriad of products that are out on the market.

COMPLIMENTARY MEMBERSHIP TO THE USGA GREEN SECTION RECORD ONLINE

THE USGA Green Section Record online is a web based magazine focusing on golf turf management and creating quality playing conditions. There is no cost to subscribe. It is published every two weeks and sent to your email inbox. If anyone would like to sign up for the record, please click on this link: [Green Section Record Subscription](#) .

CONCLUSION

It was a pleasure to visit Lookout Mountain and discuss the care of the course. Besides providing a service free of bias from affiliation with any product or manufacturer, the USGA Green Section is the largest supporter of turfgrass research in the world. This research effort is critical to ensure the future of the game of golf and the industry of turfgrass maintenance. The thrust of this research is to provide superior turfgrasses that play better and are easier to maintain while ensuring golf courses remain positive influences on the environment. Your club's membership in the USGA and support of the Green Section makes this research effort possible.

Thank you for your support of the Turfgrass Advisory Service. Please do not hesitate to call my office should you have any questions concerning this report, the research efforts of the USGA, or any other matter regarding the maintenance of your course.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris S. Hartwiger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and "H".

Chris Hartwiger
USGA Green Section, Southeast Region
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APPENDIX A: ANNUAL DUES AT PRIVATE CLUBS IN 1974

What it costs to belong to 50 golf clubs across the U. S.

CLUB	NUMBER OF GOLF HOLES	NUMBER OF FAMILY MEMBERSHIPS	INITIAL COST	ANNUAL DUES	ASSESSMENTS
Atlanta Country Club	18	390	\$ 4,000*	\$ 900	No
Atlantic City Country Club	18	400	\$ 400	\$ 550	No
Baltusrol G.C., Springfield, N.J.	36	466	\$ 3,300*	\$1,000	No
Bel Air C.C., Los Angeles	18	505	\$11,000*	\$1,200	No
Carmel Valley G. & C.C., Carmel, Calif.	18	300	\$ 6,000	\$ 780	No
Columbia C.C., Chevy Chase, Md.	18	825	\$ 3,500	\$ 720	No
Columbian C.C. of Dallas	18	400	\$ 8,000*	\$1,098	Yes
Congressional C.C., Bethesda, Md.	27	1,000	\$ 4,000	\$ 600	Yes
Country Club of Ithaca (N.Y.)	18	300	\$ 800	\$ 600	No
Country Club of Rochester (N.Y.)	21	480	\$ 2,400	\$1,044	No
Desert Forest G.C., Carefree, Ariz.	18	170	\$ 3,500	\$ 600	No
DuBois (Pa.) Country Club	18	310	\$ 200	\$ 365	No
Dutchess G. & C.C., Poughkeepsie, N.Y.	18	275	\$ 800	\$ 580	No
Elmhurst C.C., Moscow, Pa.	18	350†	\$ 700	\$ 300	No
Fort Wayne (Ind.) Country Club	18	500	\$ 2,750*	\$ 700	Yes
Gooding (Idaho) C.C.	9	93	\$ 150	\$ 40	No
Greenville (S.C.) Country Club	45	832	\$ 3,000*	\$ 600	No
Highland C.C., Fayetteville, N.C.	18	557	\$ 1,000	\$ 450	No
Holston Hills C.C., Marion, Va.	18	230	\$ 350	\$ 280	No
Hudson Hills G.C., Ossining, N.Y.	18	200	\$ 900	\$1,700	No
Indian Wells (Calif.) C.C.	27	490	\$ 4,500	\$ 990	No
Kansas City C.C., Mission Hills, Kan.	18	430	\$ 4,500	\$1,050	No
La Jolla (Calif.) Country Club	18	400	\$10,000*	\$ 960	No
Lake San Marcos (Calif.) C.C.	18	320	\$ 1,500	\$ 840	No
Lancaster (Pa.) Country Club	24	208	\$ 3,000	\$ 618	Yes
Lansing (Ill.) Sportsman Club	9	1,000	\$ 350	\$ 100	No
Manistee (Mich.) G. & C.C.	18	250	\$ 100	\$ 200	No
Memphis Country Club	18	615	\$ 5,200*	\$ 900	Yes
Montgomery (Ala.) C.C.	18	1,030	\$ 2,500	\$ 540	No
North Hills C.C., Sherwood, Ark.	18	400	\$ 600	\$ 420	Yes
North Shore C.C., Glenview, Ill.	18	465	\$ 5,000	\$1,380	Yes
Oahu C.C., Honolulu	18	535	\$ 7,000	\$ 646	No
Oak Hill C.C., Sorrento, Fla.	18	100	None	\$ 300	No
Oakland Hills C.C., Birmingham, Mich.	36	600	\$ 7,500*	\$1,200	Yes
Oklahoma City G. & C.C.	18	500	\$ 9,500*	\$ 780	No
Olympic Club, San Francisco	36	850†	\$ 3,000	\$ 331	No
Orinda (Calif.) C.C.	18	488	\$ 6,000	\$ 900	No
The Pines C.C., Morgantown, W.Va.	18	300	\$ 2,500*	\$ 360	No
Preston Trail G.C., Dallas	18	250‡	‡	\$1,500	No
Riviera C.C., Los Angeles	18	600	\$ 3,000	\$1,440	No
Rolling Hills C.C., Newburgh, Ind.	18	345	\$ 1,200	\$ 660	No
Saugahatchee C.C., Auburn, Ala.	18	530	\$ 900*	\$ 324	No
Scioto C.C., Columbus, Ohio	18	350	\$ 4,500	\$ 780	No
Seattle Golf Club	18	680†	\$ 5,000	\$ 720	No
Springfield (Mass.) C.C.	18	300	\$ 250	\$ 650	No
Waverly C.C., Portland, Ore.	18	475	\$ 4,000*	\$1,080	No
Westchester C.C., Rye, N.Y.	45	1,400	\$ 3,250*	\$1,300	Yes
Wilmington (Del.) C.C.	36	1,800	\$ 4,000*	\$ 800	No
Winged Foot G.C., Mamaroneck, N.Y.	36	441	\$ 2,000	\$1,400	No
Zaneville (Ohio) Country Club	18	423	\$ 1,200	\$ 607	No

*Includes cost of stock or bond purchase.
†Individual memberships.
‡Stock when available, approximately \$12,000.
Figures received from club managers based on initial 1974 costs.

To convert 1974 dollars to 2013 dollars, multiply by 4.72.