



Turfgrass Management: Pre and Post Shot Routine

I was at the British Turf Management Exhibition (BTME) in Harrogate, The United Kingdom this past month (January) where I had a chance to hear a speaker talk about the golf swing. Given that there are three distinct aspects of hitting a golf shot – the pre-shot routine, the shot itself, and the post-shot routine, the speaker asked the audience, which of the three aspects does a golfer have control over?

The answer was the pre and post shot routine. The shot or swing itself the golfer has little control over. Using the golf swing analogy, what aspect as turfgrass managers do we have the LEAST control over? The answer is the shot – or in our case the shot would be the weather. Given that we have little control over the weather, we still have control over the pre-shot (pre-stress) or post-shot (post stress) routine.

In contrast to your summer stress period, here in the United States we are suffering through the coldest and most miserable winter we have seen in over 20 years. Most of the blame falls on something called the “Polar Vortex”. Using our golf analogy the extreme cold (weather) is our “shot” and we can’t do much about it. However, we can monitor the health of the turf during this period by sampling to check with the turf is alive or dead. Given the extensive nature of the cold both cool and warm season turfgrasses are at risk.

From monitoring if we find that winter injury has occurred and to some extent the degree of winter injury prior to early spring, we can begin to make post-shot (post stress) management decisions, which may start by informing golfers what they can expect once they return to the golf course. We can also begin to plan and implement a post-stress management program to promote the quickest recovery.

The lessons we have learned or will learn coming through this winter, we can now apply next fall in our pre-shot (pre-stress) routine. The effect would be to increase the likelihood of a successful “shot” next winter. So as you move through the summer stress period note problems that might be occurring and try to correct or make the best of it. But once you get through the summer emphasize post-stress management practices that promote turf recovery and health. And as next spring approaches begin to prepare your “pre-shot” routine to give your turf the best shot to survive the stressful weather conditions.

How the best golfers in the world prepare to hit a golf shot, can serve as a model of how we can manage turf through stress periods.