PACE INSIGHTS *Clubhouse Edition*

2003: A problem year for overseeding

Our unusually warm weather this September and October has set a record for the poorest overseeding conditions in six years. For while the objective of overseeding is to promote the growth of ryegrass and Poa trivialis and to discourage the growth of bermudagras, our recent above-average temperatures have produced exactly the opposite effect. As a result, growth of the heat-loving bermudagrass is now surging, while newly overseeded rye and poa are dying due to heat stress. This is a situation that will be almost impossible to recover from, though a partial "save" can occur if more moderate average air temperatures (65 – 75F) prevail between now and Thanksgiving. If temperatures are either warmer or cooler though, the situation will decline further. Either way, golfers should expect to see more uneven turf, and even bare ground in some locations. Additional seed will be applied to compensate, and golfers may be asked to alter traffic and cart rules in order to give new plants every possible chance of survival. Your understanding and cooperation are greatly appreciated.

A roll of the dice

Weather is notoriously unpredictable – a situation that creates problems for everyone from weather forecasters, to sailors, to farmers to turf managers – all of whose livelihoods depend on knowing exactly what the weather will be, and exactly when. At best, they are forced to rely on educated guesses – or gambling, as those who are more cynically inclined might phrase it. And every year, the dice are rolled on when to overseed in the Coachella Valley, where the risk of high temperature interference with successful overseeding is always a crapshoot. In most years, this risk can be avoided by overseeding during the first two weeks of October.

By this point in the year, average air temperatures are **usually** less than 80F – ideal for promoting the growth of overseeded turf. Unfortunately, in 2003, we came up with "snake eyes", when high temperatures persisted into late October.

One picture (or graph): worth 1,000 words

Looking at the growth potential for ryegrass and Poa trivialis for the years 1998 – 2003 tells the whole sad story. Ryegrass growth and overseeding success were supported by good weather conditions in 1998, 2000 and 2002. The years 2001 and 1999 were more problematic, but of all of these years, the hot autumn weather of 2003 caused the worst growth of ryegrass seen in many years time (based on data from CIMIS Weather Station 118, Cathedral City, CA).