

SUPER TIP

Twist and Shout No More!

By Darren J. Davis

Maintaining a good stand of grass on the putting green and collar is perhaps one of the primary responsibilities of today's golf course superintendent. Greens are always priority number one, and the reputation of the course and superintendent is often determined by their condition. Amazingly, when the greens are good, most other inconsistencies on the course are usually overlooked.

Technological advancements and research have provided today's golf course superintendent with improved equipment, better techniques and added knowledge, enabling them to better maintain closely cut, heavily trafficked turf. However, when encountering stress in the midst of the winter golf season, such as the extremely cold and cloudy winter of 2010, turfgrass management often involves using whatever means necessary to keep grass alive!

Veteran golf course superintendent Jim Whalen at Calusa Pines in Naples, has worked at some prestigious golf courses in his career. Among them, Augusta National Golf Club and Congressional Country Club are on his resume. Similar to Augusta and Congressional, Calusa Pines prides itself on providing a challenging golfing experience with lightening fast greens.

At Calusa Pines, due to a very low height of cut and frequency of mowing and rolling, the edges and collars



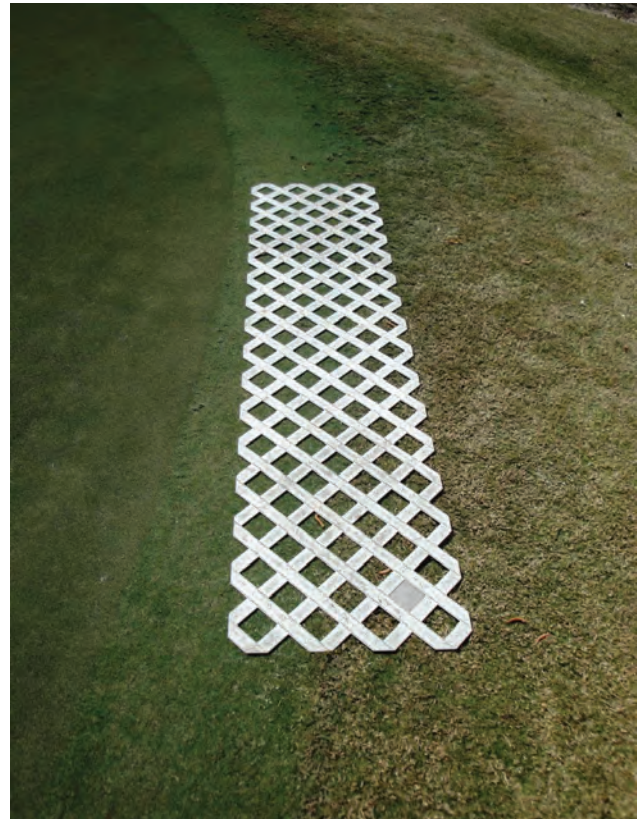
Plastic lattice sheets are lightweight and easy to transport. Photo by Darren Davis.

of some greens need a little extra attention. In part, due to the challenging Winter of 2010, Whalen instituted a practice that helps to alleviate stress on his putting green collars.

Whalen purchased a dozen sheets of 1/8 x 23-1/2x 95-inch white garden plastic lattice from Home Depot at a cost of \$11.97 each. The greens mowing crews transport the lightweight sheets of plastic lattice each morning in the backs of their utility vehicles. Before mowing, the sheets are laid flat on the collar in areas where the walking mowers

normally make their turns.

Turning on the lattice alleviates the twisting and subsequent tearing or thinning of the turfgrass in areas that are under the most stress. While at Congressional, Whalen witnessed a similar technique where plywood was used for the same purpose. He feels the lattice is equally effective, more durable and much easier for the crew to handle.



Lattice provides greens collar protection from mower turning damage. Photo by Darren Davis.