

Turf Report

Spanish Trail Golf and Country Club, Las Vegas, Nevada

Architect

Robert Trent Jones, Jr.
Palo Alto, California

General Manager

Jesse Thorpe
Las Vegas, Nevada

Head Groundskeeper

Randy Bayley
Las Vegas, Nevada

Turf Supplier and Installation Contractor

West Coast Turf
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18 Aging Fairways Renovated, Ready for Play in Just 90 Days

Seventeen years had taken their toll on the common bermuda fairways at Spanish Trail, an older private club ranked among the state's best. Playability and aesthetics were down while competition from new courses soared. For a much-needed update, the club's management called on West Coast Turf and its high-performance hybrid bermuda sod. The installation and establishment was so easy and fast, golfers were back on the first nine within seven weeks. Now, with 18 holes (about 25 acres) of new state-of-the-art turf literally rolled out before them, members say it's never been more fun to play the Trail.

Common Bermuda Fairways Past Their Prime

Built in 1984, Spanish Trail is a 27-hole course surrounded by a private, gated community in Southern Las Vegas. A big draw for this championship course is its additional nine-hole layout that allows more tee times and variety of play. Designed by Robert Trent Jones Jr., each nine has a unique character, such as water features at the Lakes Nine, strategic bunkers and mountain views at the Canyon Nine and rolling fairways at the Sunrise Nine.

"You can play the course everyday and not get tired of it," said Randy Bayley, the course's superintendent. "With a finite, private membership, this kind of thing goes far in creating satisfaction."

But by 2000, member satisfaction was at an all-time low. The trouble was aging fairways that looked and played poorly. After 17 years of overseeding, the common bermuda was losing ground to winter rye, creating a patchy mix of the two in the spring and dirt patches where the rye died out in summer heat.



Using big-roll sod and specially designed power equipment, West Coast Turf renovated one fairway per day with minimal disruption to the surrounding community and playable areas of the golf course.

Tifway 419 Bermuda at a Glance

Uses
Sports fields, commercial and residential lawns, golf course fairways and roughs

Color
Dark green

Mowing Height
3/8" — 1"

Growth Habit
Compact, dense

Leaves
Medium fine, slightly finer than Tifway II

Cushion
Excellent

Durability
Excellent

Disease Resistance
Very good to excellent

Heat Tolerance
Excellent

Spring Green Up
Aggressive

Foot-Traffic Tolerance
Excellent

Recovery From Injury
Excellent

USDA Zones
7 to 11

Options
Regular rolls, big rolls, thick cut and overseeded



The looks and playability of Spanish Trail's fairways improved dramatically by changing to Tifway 419.

"We had been concerned with our turf for several years, but it was the recent opening of several private clubs in 2000 that spurred us to action," said Bayley. "Our members began comparing our course and asking for a better product."

In response, a three-year plan was devised to update the entire course, starting with the Lakes Nine during the summer of 2001. For replacement sod on the fairways, Bayley wanted turf with aggressive spring green-up, a dark-green color and great drought, heat and traffic tolerance. He was interested in the latest high-performance hybrid bermudas.

"We visited several courses with different hybrid bermudas but Tifway 419 stood out," said Bayley. "I was impressed with its appearance and its tightly knit, upright growth."

Installation Finishes Ahead of Schedule With Minimal Impact

West Coast Turf, the West's largest grower and installer of hybrid bermuda sod, was hired to begin the renovation in mid-June. A top objective was to minimize disruption to the surrounding community and playable areas of the course. To do this, two strategies were key: crews would strip existing turf and lay hybrid bermuda one fairway at a time; and they would do so using small trucks to haul sod to and from semi-trucks parked in a secluded area. This plan of action would go far in lowering traffic and noise.

The sod itself added to the efficiency of the job. Fresh, thriving hybrid bermuda arrived in 42" x 105' big rolls, which would cover more ground and leave fewer seams to fill in for quick establishment. Also, the sod was sand grown to match the course's soil and to promote quick growth.

Once the sod was down, a roller was used to encourage sod-to-soil contact and create a smooth and true playing surface. In 15 days, nine fairways were completely done.

"The crews were so professional, careful and effective, any fears I had were put to rest," said Bayley. "Everyone was impressed with how they worked."

On August 6, just seven short weeks later, Lakes Nine reopened for play.

"We were amazed," said Jesse Thorpe, general manager for Spanish Trail. "The turf established quicker and the project went smoother than we ever imagined."

With several weeks left in the season, management changed its long-term plans and opted to overhaul Canyon Nine as well. It was finished in just five weeks. The Sunrise Nine is slated for renovation in the summer of 2002—one year ahead of schedule.

High Expectations Are Met and Exceeded

"We're not hesitating with the next nine," said Thorpe. "Our members say our fairways are every bit as good or better than any other place in town now."

Bayley agreed: "The grass looks and plays great. The ball sits up on it like a tee, and it's so tough our divots are way down. Without hesitation, I would recommend doing an upgrade like this to any superintendent. The low downtime and successful establishment has made our investment well worth it."

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