

# Give it a Rest!

**By John Foy and Todd Lowe**

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Golf carts have become an integral part of the American game, especially here in Florida due to the large number of senior golfers and courses that wind their way through real estate developments. Golf carts also are an important revenue source at many facilities. Most golfers have a limited appreciation of the significant negative impact golf carts have on turf quality and course conditioning. Along with direct turf injury and wear damage, a rapid buildup of soil compaction occurs in areas that receive concentrated traffic, and this only further limits turf growth and recovery.

Cart traffic problems are further compounded in Florida with peak seasonal play occurring during the winter when the base bermuda turf cover is not actively growing. Complaints about tight fairway lies, or even no grass, along with a lack of definition between the fairway and rough cuts occur because the turf has literally become beat down. While generally not popular with golfers or the course maintenance staff, aggressive cart traffic management needs to be an ongoing part of routine wintertime course management.

In addition to strict enforcement of multiple cart usage policies (e.g. ninety degree rule) to distribute traffic over as much area as possible, directional control devices (signs, ropes, etc.) are necessary. Directional control devices need to be put into place before the turf becomes totally worn out. They also need to be routinely moved and traffic flow patterns redirected. Supplemental aeration and fertilization of high traffic areas, such as the ends of cart paths, also can help minimize deterioration and promote some degree of recovery.

Another traffic management program or policy that is gaining popularity is simply giving the turf a rest. This is accomplished by designating one or two holes per nine as cart path only for one week at a time. This setup is rotated among the par 4 and par 5 holes throughout the winter and does not adversely affect the pace of play of a course. Naturally, accommodations need to be made for golfers with legitimate physical disabilities. Giving the turf a rest is a simple, inexpensive, yet effective cart traffic management strategy that can be utilized at all golf courses.

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