

Work and Play by John Stobbs

"There has been a regrettable tendency to think (and say): 'How can he do his work when he is out there playing golf?'. Clubs should insist that one or two games a week with the pro., Green Chairman and a member is part of the job . . ."

Thus the regular columnist Fred V. Grau in the American magazine on club and course management, *Golfdom*.

Is it a point which applies over here, too?

Student Golfers!

Grau insists that it is not enough for the man in charge of the course to know how to grow turf. "The time may not be far off when a turf student, in order to graduate in turf-grass management, will be required to develop proficiency in golf just as he now must pass technical subjects. Truly, he cannot qualify as a turf manager unless he knows the quality of turf desired by golfers. Grass can be grown without too much difficulty. Grooming grass into high-quality playing turf, pleasing to players, is the highest art in the profession."

The idea is so obvious as almost to be ridiculous to state. Yet, over there, there seems to be a need to say it. Over here, on the other hand, one would think that the proportion of Greenkeepers who do not play and love the game is very small.

Or is it? Who knows? Anyone? Certainly, when you come to think of it, there are a number of cases around of Head Greenkeepers who do not play the game at all: and countless more of Greenkeepers who never play it with the same affectionate dedication as the weekend maniacs they prepare the course for.

Understanding

Can a man who isn't wedded to the game himself, as a regular hobby, really understand what greenkeeping is all about? At the least, it's doubtful. (And the same might certainly be said of the

turf advisers whom clubs call in to prescribe treatment for greens.) But this surely is known well enough. And even the non-golfer can at least take an interest in putting; and make a point of trying out all his greens himself regularly with a putter and a few balls.

The Club's Attitude

The real question Grau may be raising for our purpose is: what is the club's attitude to the greenkeeper's right to play the game? Is it just assumed that they'll play in their spare time: summer evenings, Saturday afternoons, and after any mowing and dew-levelling on Sundays? Left like that, the Greenkeepers' golf can be something of a busman's holiday! If you've been working on the course all the week, every week, do you want to spend your free time there, too? Not every man does, by any means.

The ideal answer is, of course, that a club should expect its Greenkeepers to play a bit of golf, if not wholly during working hours, at least dovetailed into them. I remember how the greens staff in my own club before the war—one of the best and most skilled staffs anywhere, at any time—used to play five holes three or four times a week more or less during their lunch hours, apart from regular weekend games. Certainly every man among them enjoyed and understood the game, and knew from his own experience and instincts what the golfer wanted from a course (above all in those subtle qualities of play which only practical experience can teach); and equally certainly the state of the course benefited immensely from it.

Competent Player

It's probably true, too, at present, that those clubs where the Head Greenkeeper is a pretty competent player benefit from the fact. Moor Park, for instance, springs to mind at once, where the Miller brothers are two of the tigers of the County, and the two courses are kept in splendid trim.

Grau tells one story which, owing to the different nature of our grass and our general attitude to course conditions, isn't likely to apply on any but a small minority of British courses, but which still makes an interesting example of how a practical knowledge of the craft of the

game can help solve a troublesome problem on a particular course. In his own words :

"The complaint was that, in spite of heavy watering, greens would not hold a shot. The bent grass was suffering from too much water as a result. I was playing low-handicap golf then so, to test a theory, I hit a number of balls to greens from 80 yards out. Sure enough, they wouldn't hold, but the answer was in the fairway grass, not the greens.

Feather-bed

"The non-golfing superintendent, to keep the fairways 'lookin' purty', kept the thick Bermuda cut at $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches. The ball sat on top of a 'mattress' so that no one could impart control to the ball with the club face. The 'balloon ball' floated to the green and kept right on rolling off the back. By lowering the fairway cut to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch, we gave controlled shots back to the golfers, the greens held better and were healthier with less water."

Normally, in this country, you're only likely to get a "flier", as our pros. call it,

from thick wet grass in the rough. What causes it is a matter of fairly complicated golfing ballistics: but in essence it's a matter of backspin being reduced by the fact that the ball is not struck-off against a firm surface, "squeezed against the turf" as the old-fashioned jargon used to put it. You can, in fact, get much the same sort of result—a kind of "flier" if not what Grau calls a "balloon ball"—off thin, loose, sandy turf on seaside courses. But Grau's does make an interesting illustration of how a tricky problem, making everyone scratch their heads at a course, may really be a quite different problem shown its effects in such a way as to disguise its real cause.

It's also an example, of course, of how the playing quality of a course has to be examined as a whole, and understood as a whole—which only a practising enthusiast for the game is ever likely to be able to do.

Which brings us back to where Fred V. Grau kicked off. Playing the course is part of the Greenkeepers' job; and any club that doesn't recognise this ought to have its brains examined.

PRESIDENT'S GOLF PLEA

Gosforth Golf Club's Annual Dinner last night was, as ever, a relaxed social event at which gay quips and entertainment were the keynotes (*writes Ken McKenzie*).

Yet with such a distinguished gathering of members and guests, matters of moment did arise, and county President Mr. Charles N. Storey, of Whitley Bay, took the opportunity to make some heartfelt remarks.

He gave everyone pleasure by commenting, as had Gosforth Captain, Mr. W. G. H. Beaman, on the fine Bridle Path services of Mr. Tom Oliver, who has been greenkeeping at Gosforth for 44 years—and last night looked one of the fittest men present.

"It is one of my ambitions that the status and importance of highly skilled greenkeepers, in these days when specialised knowledge and experience on a course are so important, should be elevated," he said, to warm applause.

(*Newcastle Journal*)

HURLINGHAM SHOW

T. Parker & Sons'

"Guessing Height of Pole" Competition

The winners are as hereunder:—

Wednesday, 30th September.

Winner: S. G. Ledger, Esq., East Berks. Golf Club, Crowthorne, Berks.

Gussed height: 29 ft. $3\frac{3}{4}$ in.

Correct height: 29 ft. $3\frac{1}{4}$ in.

Thursday, 1st October.

Winner: R. Fenwick, Esq., Appleby Frodingham Ltd., Steel Works, Scunthorpe, Lincs.

Gussed height: 34 ft. 3 in.

Correct height: 34 ft. $2\frac{1}{2}$ in.

SITUATIONS VACANT

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