

WHY WINTER GREENS?

by W. H. Bartle

The Sports Turf Research Institute

WITH the dawn of another new year the golfer will soon be welcoming a gradual increase in daylight and with it the prospect of an extra hole or two. Winter is however still with us and very often the most severe weather conditions are experienced between now and spring.

During this period there will be many heated exchanges at the 19th on the pros and cons of closing the course on such and such a date or whether or not winter greens should have been in use last weekend.

Such decisions have to be made at times if we wish to eliminate or reduce winter damage on the greens to a minimum.

Unless the course is covered with snow, keen players will always wish to keep in trim and will expect their game. It is therefore the duty of officials and greenkeepers to meet their demands as far as practicable. In so doing, however, putting surfaces must be safeguarded for the real golfing season and this means unpopular alternatives may have to be offered on occasions. When such alternatives have to be employed we must try to explain the reasons in simple terms which the layman will understand and appreciate. This can be done as follows:—

Damage under wet conditions

When exceptionally wet conditions prevail, the effects of play severely compact the surface soil, particularly on the area around the hole where concentration of foot traffic is greatest. This also has the effect of puddling the surface, which together with the additional compaction reduces the passage of air and moisture. Short-term effects are weakening of the turf resulting in the grass cover thinning out and a risk of Fusarium patch disease attack due to the aforementioned points. Long-term effects are delayed recovery and

thin areas which may still exist into the growing season.

Damage under frosty conditions

Damage caused by play during frosty conditions falls into two main categories, viz:—

- (a) When the plant tissues are frozen they are easily bruised by foot traffic. After a thaw, browning of the turf can often be noted and footmarks may remain visible for several weeks. The greater the weight of play in hard frost the more severe becomes the extent of this damage. Areas subjected to such damage will remain thin for very long periods affecting the truthness of the putting surface well into the main season. Furthermore it has been established that intensively managed putting green turf affected by frost damage is particularly susceptible to Fusarium patch disease in the spring period.
- (b) Even more long-term damage is caused by play after a sudden thaw. Under these conditions the top $\frac{1}{2}$ in. or so becomes soft but the underlying soil remains frozen hard. At such times roots are severely damaged by the shearing action caused by the player's feet moving the soft, unfrozen surface across the frozen sub-surface. This creates very weak areas which may not recover before the height of the season. Under these conditions, surface disturbance is also likely, resulting in some puddling and disruption of putting surfaces.

These are the chief reasons why we should keep off the greens under really adverse conditions and bring winter greens into use.

Winter Greens

Unfortunately the quality of these alternatives often leaves much to be
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desired and this fact is largely responsible for the objections which are vociferously raised by the players.

Ideally, winter greens of some 100-200 sq. yds. in extent should be provided, well clear of the major putting surfaces, preferably to one side away from the main approach. These should be prepared well in advance, ie during the late summer/early autumn period. Preparation should consist of scarification, fertiliser treatment, weed and earthworm control measures if necessary and top dressing, etc., all aimed at producing surfaces only slightly inferior to the actual greens. This work is unfortunately often overlooked. Hurried last minute efforts then made only produce complaints and annoyance. The answer obviously lies with the greenkeeper.

We should at all times remember that if the grass is visible, play will be expected but a sense of perspective is required.

But winter golf is normally less competitive than golf outside this period and if the little inconvenience caused by employing winter greens is accepted by players then the actual greens will be better preserved for when they are required and expected to be at their best. Equally officials and greenkeepers should make every possible effort to ensure that the alternatives offered are of acceptable quality.

Make sure in future that winter greens receive sufficient thought and preparation and by so doing keep everyone happy—at least you will have tried.

SITUATION VACANT

THE ESTORIL GOLF COURSE near Lisbon in Portugal is looking for a British Greenkeeper. Or perhaps two. The initial engagement would be for a period of three years with an optional break after six months. If two brothers or a Head Greenkeeper with his son or assistant wished to apply that arrangement would be perfectly acceptable and, indeed, preferred.

The Club wishes to modernise its green-keeping methods and all the necessary machinery and adequate labour will be provided for efficient operation.

There is a large British community in Lisbon and those concerned with the golf club will see that the successful applicants and their families are made to feel at home.

Estoril has been a year round holiday resort since the last century. Even January is sunny with blue skies.

Taxes are low and this would be taken into account in fixing a salary, but initially applicants should state their required income in sterling. The remuneration will be as good or better than the top jobs in Britain, accommodation will be provided and there will be an allowance for travel.

The job calls for experience, enthusiasm and common sense. Head Greenkeepers or First Assistants wishing to apply should write in the first place to Box No. 269, c/o The British Golf Greenkeeper, Addington Court Golf Club, Featherbed Lane, Croydon. CRO 9AA.

State: Age

Family Commitments

Experience

Salary required

And give one reference

Write before the 1st February if possible.