

18 HOLES WITH HAWTREE

No. 10—DO IT YOURSELF

by FRED HAWTREE

DEAR G.,

Many thanks for your letter. I was interested to hear that you are going to make the new green at the 4th this autumn. You seem to have done all the necessary preliminaries but I will run through them again in case you have missed any.

During the early summer you will have had prepared the plan showing existing and proposed contours over the site and calculated quantities of top-soil, turf seed, peat, drain-pipes, sand, clinker, stone. These have now been ordered and those, like drain pipes, with uncertain delivery are already near the job.

You also booked a Drott with the 4-way bucket—a very useful machine for this sort of work—because it will both dig and carry and is not too damaging to the turf it traverses provided it keeps straight. However you also marked out a route to the new green which would avoid playing areas and which would even allow lorries to deliver materials right up to the new green when the ground was dry. This will avoid a large number of journeys with your own tractor and trailer, save double-handling, and release more of your own staff for shaping up the new formation by hand.

Everything should be done in this way to save time. You are operating with a fairly small ground staff, the weather at this season is uncertain (though it is the only time the work can be done in this way) and it is important to get all the turf back by Christmas. That is presumably why you are only tackling one green this year. There is nothing more depressing than opening up too much ground and seeing the job run on into spring next year, especially as there are

still routine tasks to be done on the rest of the course which cannot be neglected.

A temporary green was also prepared last summer, so that it could be in reasonable condition by now and enable you to switch the turf from the old green to the new one, when the time comes, without much disturbance to play.

You have also mown down all the grass over the site of the new green so that turf can be readily stripped and re-used. I expect you have also booked a turf lifting machine (because that too will save hours of hand work) and arranged to alter the water system. I know your head greenkeeper is in your confidence and has had plenty of time to organise his programme to fit in this extra task. I think that brings us up to date. Now for the work itself.

When the turf is stripped from the site make sure a big enough area is cleared. It is surprising how big an area is needed, especially for a built up green, if the banks are to be graded out properly. As a rough guide you will need at least twice the area of the putting surface; keep machines inside this limit.

As it may be a month or two before the turf is relaid, it will be better to lay it out rather than roll or stack it. Otherwise there will be considerable discolouration.

Now remove the top-soil and place this to one side or at the back of the green not on the approach which should be disturbed as little as possible.

Next form the new contours in the sub-soil. If you import filling material, make sure that it is stable, and properly consolidated. Even if you are only levelling by out and fill see that the filling is done in layers each one firmed up before the next one goes on.

The bunkers and featuring should be

done at the same time as the general formation. If they are added afterwards they seldom blend so well. Avoid anything that could be called a "pimple"—smoothly flowing undulations on a broad scale will look much better. By all means introduce gentle folds into the putting area but remember that the more rolling the green surface the bigger the total area to provide adequate space for cutting the hole and distributing wear. The folds must not be so pronounced as to cause maintenance problems and they should not cause water to collect in hollows.

Unless the sub-soil is free-draining you will next instal the drains and the drainage layer—stone rejects blinded with ash or chippings. Even if none of your present greens have one, it looks as though the amount of play in the future will make rapid drainage essential if your new green is to remain healthy. On a sandy or a light loam this will probably not be necessary. Then you should sub-soil cultivate the surrounds of the new formation (and wherever the Drott has been) to relieve compaction. A rotovator

will only make the situation worse.

Now the top-soil can be spread. Whether you take the top-soil from the old green or use new, make sure that it has the right degree of permeability by adding the appropriate amounts of sharp sand and peat. The Sports Turf Research Institute will tell you what these should be. Extend the soil-mix on to the approach or on to a site for a frost green if you can afford it.

By now a month or more will have passed and you have got the rest of November to firm up the soil, prepare it, lay the turf, and give a final top-dressing. If the weather has held you up (and never try to beat the weather by working when the soil is wet) you still have December in reserve. So you should have the new green ready for play next May.

A final word. If you have not made all the preparations, warned the members, organised your ground staff, the hired machinery, the materials, and advice—don't start now. Wait until next autumn.

Yours ever,
F.

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