

## Speeding Up Slow Fairways

By JOHN FRANCES

AT this time of year many golf courses will find that the fairways have become very slow and dead, and the usual fast play is no longer possible. Very few green committees know the reason for this defect, and fewer still know any way of overcoming it. It is my purpose to describe a method which has given good results during my years of practice, and one which I am sure will help a great many committees to vastly improve their fairways.

The reason for the slowness of nearly all fairways may be found in the large accumulation of clippings from the mower and also the other small refuse which has worked its way into the turf. This material fills up the spaces between the grass plants, depriving them of light and air, and thereby retards their proper growth. It also forms a spongy mat on the surface of the soil, and new grass plants either do not germinate beneath it or die out through inability to force themselves through. Clippings are allowed to lie for the purpose of rotting and forming fertilizer. However, long before they do this, they have killed the tender shoots which are trying to come up. In my opinion, it is far better to remove them and let them rot in a compost pile, in which favorable conditions are made to assist the process of decay. Those who doubt this may take a few handfuls of clippings and spread them over a patch of young grass. After four or five days they may be removed. The young grass will be greatly retarded and will be yellow in color, thus proving the injurious action of clippings.

However, once the difficulty is encountered, the following method will remove the cause of trouble. In the fall, when the heavy play is about over and the fairways are beginning to get less care than formerly, procure an ordinary road sweeper (perhaps one

can be hired from the highway department of an adjacent town). Sweep the whole of the course with the brush set fairly hard and at an angle of about twenty degrees. This will cast clippings up into winthrows, which can be easily gathered and carted away, to be put in a heap to form a compost. Follow up sweeper with mowing machine, and, if the accumulation of grass clippings is heavy, I advise sweeping again, until careful inspection shows that the ground is free from clippings, branches, twigs, etc. Broadcast manure, or better still, some good humus, as you will have fewer weeds next spring if humus is used. If the committee should decide to purchase seed, this will be the time to sow some good fairway mixture that will fill in the bad lies and leave the course in fair condition for the coming spring. If the fairways, after sweeping, show many bad cups and hollows, especially where the water can form into ice and thus produce frostkill, I can strongly recommend the use of a disc harrow used so that the completed work will look like a large checker board. Do not set cutters at an angle, but keep them straight. After passing the sweeper *lightly* over the whole course, to even up the spread of humus, then run a roller over the ground and let lie until ready for mowing again, when it will be found to have improved the grass and also increased the speed of the course. By opening up the soil the grass can better absorb the nitrogen and moisture, which results in still further improvement.

Besides improving the course, this operation will reduce the cost of upkeep, because the amount of rubbish which is swept away in the carting of the clippings, such as stones, broken bottles, tin cigarette boxes, etc., is surprisingly great, and all such trash causes more loss of time from the mowing machine being out of commission than most people realize.