

THE GOLF COURSE

A MONTHLY BULLETIN DEVOTED TO THE DISCUSSION OF MODERN METHODS AS APPLIED TO GOLF COURSE CONSTRUCTION AND UPKEEP

Speeding Golf Turf Production

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WHEN the production of Golf Turf was first started on a large scale, it was necessary to break down the hoary argument that a close-matted turf could not be grown in less than three years, but it was done at Sunningdale, England, by getting that fine course into play in just twelve months.

This in a way created quite a sensation, but there was really nothing to it, as it simply proved the contention that if the sowing of 100 lbs. per acre of suitable grass seed would produce a close turf in three years, a sowing of 200 lbs. per acre would produce a close turf in less than half that time.

It took the golfers a year or two to get used to this high speed, but I knew quite well that before very long it would become commonplace and that we would be asked to further reduce that "dead and expensive period" when the turf is maturing and when there is nothing doing so far as the club is concerned, except to wait patiently and pay interest on the capital. We therefore kept on experimenting and bided our time.

The next chance arrived with the making of the Sandy Lodge Golf Course, which is one of the best in the London district. The Club obtained possession of a fine stretch of undulat-

ing ground with a sandy soil. All the capital required to develop it was obtained very quickly and we were given a free hand. The result was that, with the help of nature, the Club had a perfect golfing turf in just under six months.

Since then the process of speeding up has continued, but I think the limit has at last been reached at the Royal Automobile Golf Course at Woodcote Park, Surrey, and the Gleneagles Golf Course in Perthshire, Scotland. Both of these are twenty-seven-hole courses—laid out in such a way that any two sections of nine holes can be played to make up a full round, and the capital sunk in the ventures amounted to £300,000, or say \$1,500,000.

I was given full control of the preparation of the soil and seeding, and in both cases was instructed to produce the very best quality of turf in the shortest possible space of time, regardless of expense, as the directors recognized that economy lay in speed and quality.

I went all out to make fresh records. The soil was fertilized with every care, the seed beds prepared as if for growing choice rare flowers, and mixtures of the very finest and most expensive dwarf growing grasses were made up

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and sowed at the rate of 600 lbs. per acre on the greens and 400 lbs. per acre on the fair greens. The results simply begged description. Within six weeks of the date of sowing, the greens and fair greens were clothed with a turf which made that beautiful natural turf at St. Andrews look quite shabby in comparison—but alas! the great European war broke out—work on the club houses was stopped and in consequence, the courses were not formally opened and my victory proved a barren one.

The mixtures used on these courses were based on a careful analysis of the famous Silloth turf of Scotland. The seeds were taken from our choicest stocks, cleaned and re-cleaned up to the highest point of purity and mixed with the utmost care, but as they produce a magnificent turf in such a short period of time, they proved to be both cheap and economical when sown at the rate of 600 lbs. per acre on the green and 400 lbs. per acre on the fair greens, making the cost of seeding \$198 and \$116, respectively per acre.

In the United States, such heavy and apparently costly sowings have not yet been attempted, but as soon as the green committees of new golf courses realize that the splendid golfing turf which has made the Detroit, Old Elm and Mayfield Golf Courses famous throughout the country, is not only due to the use of the very finest grass seeds, but also to the heavy rate of sowing—they will soon fall into line and the system will be adopted generally. The advantages of heavy sowing are as follows:

1. The turf is produced in a minimum space of time.
2. The grass plants being crowded together from the very start afford each other mutual protection from cold, searching winds and the hot sun—and being checked to an extent in their lateral growth, seek relief in deep rooting, with the result

that a dwarf, fibrous, hardy, drought resisting turf is produced.

3. The chance of failure on a thin patchy turf is eliminated.

A first-class golfing turf should be so thick and fibrous that it is impossible for the ball to fall through it and rest on the hard ground, and this can only be achieved by sowing dwarf matting grasses thickly.

If the seed is sown too thinly, each little plant has to stand for itself, and unless the seasons are abnormally favorable, the turf never closes up. On the contrary, it usually gets thinner and thinner, with the result that before long the ball falls through the turf and rests on the hard ground. There is little or no pleasure in playing a ball off hard-baked ground, as such a stroke is apt to break the club or jar one's wrists. It can be avoided by sowing the fairways with a correct mixture of seed at the rate of 300 to 400 lbs. per acre, and surely it is economical to do so, because when all is said and done, golf courses are classified largely by the quality of the turf found on the greens and fairways.

The average golfer in charge of the construction of a new course scarcely realizes the actual saving which will result from the shortening of the time required to get the turf ready for play. A specific example will bring this out more clearly. Suppose the capital stock of the club to be \$50,000. The interest on this will be, at 5 per cent., \$2,500 per year. To this must be added cost of upkeep, rent, loss of revenue, etc. In the aggregate this can easily amount to \$10,000 a year. In other words the course costs the club from \$250 to \$1,000 a month while the turf is maturing and this is all dead loss. One can easily figure out just how much money can be saved in his own case if his course can be made ready for play in several months shorter time than the ordinary. Really high-class turf can be had from the start and the resultant money saving is well worth the consideration of a new club.