

# THE GOLF COURSE

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

## Mowing Different Kinds of Putting Greens

By W. H. TUCKER, SR.

IF a barber were to employ the same methods on the bobbed head of a flapper as he does on the thinly covered dome of an old timer, he probably would not remain a barber very long. In the same way, should a greenkeeper mow an all-fescue or fescue-bent green in the same way as a green composed of red top and other grasses, then *he* ought not to remain a greenkeeper very long, unless, of course, he is ready to see the error of his ways. Maybe this article will help him to do so.

Both a flapper and an old timer know when to visit the barber. A greenkeeper should also know when to start mowing his greens in the Spring. If he is uncertain, nature provides a very sure guide. Forsythia, that popular shrub which is to be found in nearly all northern states, blossoms into a very beautiful mass of yellow flower almost before any of its leaves are formed. Directly this shrub is in full bloom is the time to start mowing the greens, no matter whether they are composed of fescue, bent, red top or other less desirable grasses. What does matter is the

method employed on the different kinds of turf.

### *Mowing all-fescue or fescue-bent greens.*

In the case of all-fescue and fescue-bent greens, I strongly advise that the knives of the mowing machine, for the first half dozen cuttings, be raised  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch above what is normal later in the season. This normal height I will call in future the regular playing cut. The raising of the knives will allow the young plants to gain sufficient strength to stand up under the closer cutting which is to follow. This "high cut" should be maintained for the first ten days or so, after which the knives should be gradually lowered  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch at a time until by the end of the following week they are down to the level of the regular playing cut. From this time on the greens must be cut every two days, no matter what the growth of the grass. Without regular cutting, it is impossible to preserve the texture of a fescue turf.

On more than one occasion I have seen really fine fescue greens in a

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deplorably coarse and wiry state, due entirely to the fact that they were not mown early enough in the Spring. The result has been that the undergrowth has developed a brown, unhealthy appearance, which has prompted a rush to the fertilizer bag to restore the color. The color can be restored by fertilizing but the texture can only be restored after weeks of constant cutting. Fertilizing will actually aggravate the situation, and the greenkeeper's slogan should be starve the grass and cut it and water it regularly.

*Red Top, Blue Grass, Poa Annua, Clover, etc.*

In the case of a mixed green composed of the above grasses, I specifically mention clover because it thrives with such grasses. Greens composed of these grasses are usually coarse in Spring, and for this reason it is advisable to drag-mat them or give the turf a light scratching with a rake. This treatment will enable the blades of the red top and other grasses to stand up, at the same time bruising and thinning out the clover patches, thus permitting the finer grasses to tiller out and mature.

For the first cutting of these mixed greens, it is advisable to cut very close in order to catch the coarser red top blades and clover heads. If the green is inclined to look thin after this treatment, it is a good time to seed and top-dress in the manner described in my article of March 25th. If, however, the green appears, after raking, to be in good health and of dense growth, it should not be cut for two days, after which the knives should be raised  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch above the regular playing cut and maintained at this height for one week. From then on, that is after the bottom growth and young grass have acquired sufficient strength to stand close cutting, the

knives should be set down to the level of the playing cut.

*To catch the cut grass or let it fly?*

In the case of fescue and bent greens I strongly advise that the clippings be caught every other day until the end of May, after which date until the end of September the clippings should be allowed to fly except on wet days. This is important for if the clippings are allowed to fly when the grass is growing strong and is naturally very succulent, excessive grass clippings are liable to lie too close to the roots with the result that should moist weather be followed by hot humid weather, the clippings will quickly decompose, ferment and provoke aldehyde, mildew, fungus, etc.

With mixed greens of Red Top, Blue Grass, Poa Annua, White Dutch clover and possibly Crested Dogstail, the question of using the grass catchers is entirely different, though the procedure is more or less the same. The blades of these grasses are not so fine or hard as those of fescue and will dry up more rapidly. The cut grass will not stick to the surface so much and will be forced up by the rapid growth of these coarser grasses. But even so the clippings should be caught until the end of May. The greens should be mown every day during this period and will probably produce from four to five boxes of clippings (about 20 to 30 lbs.) at each cutting. Such a quantity is altogether too much for a dry mulch. Moreover this is the period during which Poa Annua forms its seed stems, flowers, ripens and in two weeks is blown broadcast over the course. By catching the grass during the seeding period the growth of Poa Annua is naturally retarded.

An all-Poa Annua green is not to be despised but it is expensive to maintain. It has a way of slumping after the seeding period and becoming weak and thin in July, thus allowing clover and crab grass a chance to get a hold.