

Heavy Versus Light Sowings

THE Chairman of the Construction Committee of a Golf Club which is building an entire new course or a few new holes is confronted with the necessity of deciding on the quantity of seed that should be sown. He usually has to choose between two or more conflicting sets of recommendations specifying widely different amounts of seed for the particular work in hand.

There are a number of reasons both for and against either heavy or light sowings, as the case may be. Why should one seedsman advise 200 pounds of seed to the acre of fairway and another advise 100 pounds? Why should a so-called expert go as low as 75 pounds, or less?

In the case of a new course, the Club has invested a lot of money in land, which, for an 18-hole course of championship length, will usually mean from 120 to 200 acres of ground. This depends on the adaptability of the site to golfing purposes, the desire to sell off lots near the course for building homes, and the ability to get a certain desired tract by taking more or less not needed land. In these days, especially near the large cities, the investment will run all the way from \$25,000 to over \$500,000. The carrying charges on the purchase price, whatever that may be, are a very considerable item in the Club's budget.

Next, there is the cost of construction to be considered. Depending on the nature of the land available, the layout of the course, and the desires of the members as to how perfect a course they want, the cost of construction will run from say \$25,000 up to as high as \$150,000, or even more in some cases. This cost also adds materially to the carrying charges, for the money must come from somewhere. Frequently this cost is financed by an issue of bonds, which means amortization charges to be added to the other expenses.

Especially in the case of new courses, there is the fact that the full quota of members cannot usually be secured until the course is ready for play, or very nearly so. In addition, it is usually impossible to get new members to pay their initiation fee, or buy their bonds or shares of stock all in a lump, particularly when they cannot play practically at once. This means that unless the course is made ready for play at the earliest possible moment, there is a period of a year or a year and a half while the charges are piling up with no adequate revenue to take care of them, thus adding immensely to the total cost of the project, and thereby to the dues which must be asked of the members in years to come.

These points indicate that speed is most desirable in the building of a new course, and that it is very wasteful to delay the opening of the course for play. In order to do this, it is essential that the construction work should proceed with the least possible delay, and that the turf should be brought to playing condition as soon as possible.

It has been demonstrated so often that it is almost unnecessary to repeat it, that the way to get golfing turf quickly is to sow plenty of seed. This applies to the fairways quite as well as the putting greens. It is possible, and we ourselves would undertake it any time, to produce a first class turf for golf with a third or a quarter of the quantity of seed usually recommended by us, but it could not be done fast enough to suit the average membership from the playing point of view, and it could not be done economically from the financial point of view. It would take at least an extra full growing season, and might take the greater part of a second additional season. The cost of the seed would be far less than under usual circumstances, but the additional carrying charges would in almost every

instance eat up many times the saving in the cost of seed and materials.

If the total cost of the land plus the construction work is only \$100,000, a very low figure and one which is nearly always exceeded unless land is very cheap, the carrying charges amount to around \$6,000 a year. If the outlay is \$250,000, a more usual figure, especially near the large cities where land is costly, the charges will run around \$15,000 a year. Is it not worth adding quite a bit to the cost of the seed sown if it will enable play to start a season sooner, or will do that and give a first class playing turf in addition to attract new members?

On top of the extra total cost entailed by a light sowing, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to secure a membership that would wait any such length of time for a place to play golf. The average American is not so constituted that he will wait for anything a moment longer than he has to. Most of us want action in a hurry and are apt to lose interest if our requirements are not supplied quickly. We live in a fast age, and golf courses will probably have to be built quickly for some time to come. In the case of new courses, the desire for speed will bring about more economical results in the end. Perhaps this is the exception to the generally accepted notions about speed that goes to prove the old proverb about exceptions proving the rule.

In the case of additions to an existing course, there are some instances where there is no great need for speed in construction from the economical standpoint, since the newly used land may already be a part of the course. In such a case, one could hardly charge up the carrying expense of that portion of the land to the new hole, for the charges would go on regardless of the new work. Here is a chance for a less expensive procedure, if a slow job will save anything. Just the same, where is the golf course at which the players will daily pass

some new work without making life miserable for the Greens Committee if the new hole cannot be used soon. Most members are not especially interested in the cost of such work, but only how soon they can play on it.

We have frequently produced golf courses complete and ready for play in less than eight months from the time of turning the first stone. In several cases the work has been done in six months or less. It is common to start work in July and have a course entirely seeded down in early September, with a splendid stand of grass long before the snow flies. Such courses can usually be opened by Decoration Day if the Spring weather is favorable. But such results cannot be produced with light sowings. 250 pounds of seed to the acre of fairway is none too much, and more has been used with most gratifying results. The putting greens will seldom come along quickly and well with less than 150 pounds each, although this will vary with the size of the green.

In conclusion, we might say that the financial end of the sowing is really the crux of the whole matter, assuming the membership is satisfied. If the fixed charges will permit, use less seed; if they are heavy, use more seed. The saving on one side must be balanced off against the extra cost of the other.

POLO FIELDS AND ATHLETIC FIELDS must have a firm turf; a combination similar to a Tennis Lawn, which will produce a deep rooted turf that will penetrate deep into the soil, and should be reinforced at the proper time with a "recovering" variety of grasses. Such a mixture should produce a turf that will not only stand a tremendous amount of abuse, but it must be "holding," also heal quickly after cutting up; a springy turf that will reduce to the minimum the chances of the ponies becoming lame, as they will do on a hard surface with a shallow thin rooted turf of the pasture variety of grasses.