

Leveling Bumpy Peat Fairways

By O. J. NOER

Fairways on peat soil in northern regions where the ground freezes to a depth of several feet or more become a vexing problem within a few years after the golf course is completed. Newly drained peat does not settle to a compact soil until after initial decomposition has taken place. Peat has a tremendous water-holding capacity. Huge mounds develop as the water in it freezes and expands during late fall and early winter. When the ground thaws in the spring and the mounds subside surfaces become uneven. They are not bad at first but become very bumpy and uneven after a few years. The fairway mowers scalp the top of the bumps and are unable to cut grass in the low spots between them. Golf balls are hard to find because most of them lodge in the low spots and are covered by long grass. Playing anything but winter rules is impossible, and walking over the rough terrain becomes a chore.

Some of the courses in the Minneapolis-St. Paul district have extensive peat areas on fairways. The greenkeepers, and others, have experimented in search of a leveling method which would be reasonable in cost and not seriously interrupt play.

Rolling with heavy power rollers used for road work was tried with indifferent success. Covering with loam soil to a depth of several feet was proposed and tried in a small way. It was a satisfactory method except for cost.

The turf on peat fairways contains a high proportion of stoloniferous bent grass. Leonard Bloomquist of Superior Golf Club in Minneapolis decided to experiment on part of one fairway and rely upon stolons of the old bent grass sod to produce new turf on the leveled fairway. The experimental area was cross-disced with a farm disc until the turf was cut into small chunks and the surface soil was loose so it could be moved with a drag. A spike-tooth harrow, with the teeth tilted backwards, was used to level the surface. Then the fairway was rolled lightly to press the chunks of grass into the soil. Growth of the stolons was fostered by timely rains or

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1. Bumpy peat fairway before levelling. 2. Discing two ways. 3. Thoroughly discd fairway ready for rolling and levelling. 4. Peat fairway more than six years after discing and levelling.



KNICKERS AT PGA NATIONAL

Howard Scoggins, who came back from the ETO to go into golf playing equipment and apparel business, is urging pros to give golfers the "new look" by bringing knickers back into popularity. Howard lines up knicker-clad gentlemen of the PGA ensemble at the pros' Dunedin National course. L to R: Johnny Spence, Charles Cross, Albert Polagy, Howard Scoggins, Robert Dale and Frank Sprogell.

LEVELING FAIRWAYS

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irrigation, and by the use of fertilizer. Turf coverage was obtained within a few weeks.

Nothing further was done during the war, or afterwards, until the early fall of 1947. By that time many of the fairways were very bumpy, but the leveled experimental area was still smooth and in excellent condition for play. Leveling operations were resumed and are to be continued until all the peat areas have been reworked.

Early spring is a satisfactory time but early fall is the most convenient time to do the work because play falls off then. It can be done in early spring but golfers are more resentful then because they are eager to start play after the long period of inactivity due to winter. Fall operations should start right after Labor Day so turf coverage will be obtained before winter stops growth. Half the fairway, in a lengthwise direction, can be done one year and the other half the next year. This gives players some turf for play each year.

One of the accompanying pictures shows the surface and the turf on the experimental area more than six years after discing and leveling. Another shows the bumpy and uneven surface on an original peat fairway. The others show the farm disc in operation and the disc area before leveling with drag or spike-tooth harrow.

Suggests Warm-up Nets At First Tees

John M. Brennan in his *Off the Fairway* column in Long Island City (NY) *Star & Journal* quotes Spencer Murphy, pro at Glen Oaks GC, and Emil Spivak, Charlie Margett and other members in advocating nets near the first tees of clubs that haven't practice fairways for "warming-up" players before starting on rounds. The pro and his members told of Willie Hoppe in attaining his talent, practicing eight hours a day, and of golf's star pros and amateurs practicing plenty. But the high handicap player who needs to shake out the kinks comes out to the club, finds his partners impatiently awaiting him and starts off hopelessly awkward and cold.

Brennan's column continues:

"Spencer Murphy, the able pro at Glen Oaks who recently suggested a practice fairway for every golf club to enable players to "warm up" as in other games before embarking on a match, suggested that clubs lacking suitable space for a practice fairway could use several driving nets, preferably near the first tee. The members waiting to tee off could avail themselves of a chance to unlimber in the nets. There the members of the futile foursome could shape themselves into something more resembling Ben Hogan with a few preliminary flourishes as they await the call from the starter.

"Margett likes the idea of providing nets and declared that the high-handicap players would greatly benefit from such innovations at the other clubs. The appeal of the nets would be tremendous. The salutary effects would be few, to say the least. Instead of starting his trek over 18 holes cold, as customarily, our harassed friend would, by a few minutes with the ball in the net, smooth out muscles that had become moldy during the week of physical inactivity and inculcate more confidence in a timorous mind. He would, in truth, be on the ball.

"The cost of installing these nets would be infinitesimal compared to the expedition of traffic on a busy weekend. Having warmed its several swings, each foursome would play better golf from the beginning and with keener anticipation and far more enjoyment. They'd move along more rapidly. They'd slice and hook with less exaggeration. Soon they would be paring strokes from their scores and handicaps—getting from the 100 class to the 90 and even 80 category.

"Exploring the potentials of these driving nets further, it might not be a poor idea if the pro or his assistant were present to correct any alarming symptoms that might have developed over a week of inactivity. The interminable interlude from Sunday