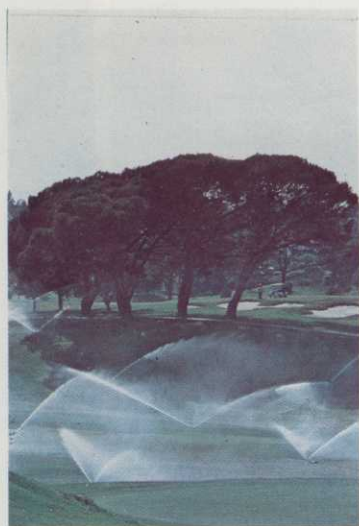


THE GREENING OF GOLF

Automatic irrigation masters even the toughest courses



Virtually all golf courses today employ some sort of irrigation or sprinkler system to water their turf, but many of these systems are really not up to handling the task demanded of them.

In most of these cases, the system is simply timeworn. It may have been fine when the course was built or the sprinklers installed, but time has very deleterious effects on irrigation systems. The pipes and other components corrode and deteriorate; rust, silt, sand, and other impurities build up inside the system; and the water pressure amplifies even the smallest breaks and cracks. Tree roots, burrowing rodents, and careless maintenance personnel can wreak havoc on the underground (which is to say **most**) parts of a water system. Unfortunately, the cost in time and money and inconvenience to golfers keeps many superintendents from digging up the old system for renovation or replacement.

Many other systems are old and, although not in too bad condition, outdated. A survey of golf course superintendents across the country conducted by GOLF BUSINESS earlier this year showed that more than half were still using hose and/or quick-coupler watering systems. There's nothing wrong with these systems in themselves, and in areas where little watering is done or few changes in watering patterns and schedules must be made, they work just fine. But on courses requiring fairly complicated timing and spacing of sprinklers — frequently combined with necessary adaptability to changes in weather — automatic irrigation is practically a must. Placing and replacing sprinkler components manually just requires too much time and labor (which equals money).

A third consideration in re-thinking a golf course watering system is that of the requirements of the terrain. Often automatic irrigation can help a superintendent overcome problems he actually had thought would prevent him from using an automatic system. The two stories that follow are cases in point.

Even though your course may not be as extreme a case as either of these two — or even if it's worse — there's still a lesson to be learned here. That is: before you make up your mind on what to do about irrigation, ask an expert. Ask a consultant or a manufacturer's representative what he thinks would be the best type of system for your course, for your individual situation. Unlike a greensmower or a golf car, an irrigation system can't be bought off the shelf, delivered to the course, and put to work. It requires knowledge and planning, but the results will be worth it.

