The Perils of Playing on Freeze-Dried Greens

By Joe Gambatese

Golfers anxious to loosen up their winter-rusted swing were delighted this week when the temperatures rose into the 50's and 60's. But not the golf course superintendent. He was in a tough spot and deserved sympathy and understanding rather than being the target of criticism.

Its the superintendent's job to keep golfers happy by providing greens that are in good condition during the playing season. Naturally, he wants to keep them from being damaged during the winter. There is no problem in cold weather; walking on frozen greens by a few golfers causes little damage. But when the surface thaws and the turf underneath remains frozen, as happened this week, watch out.

"When frozen greens get mushy, walking on them does more than create bumps," says Dr. Fred V. Grau of the Musser International Turfgrass Foundation, former director of the USGA Green Section. "It disrupts the root system, which can't be repaired until spring."

Woodmont's superintendent, Bob Shields, national president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association in 1965, feels that surface damage - the footprints - are not a big problem.

"We can fix footprints," he explains. "But we can't fix the grass roots which die because walking on thawed greens breaks the stems from the roots that are frozen in the ground."

Bill Black has warned his Congressional members of the compaction that results from walking on a frozen green whose surface has thawed.

"Fertilization becomes less efficient, water cannot penetrate properly, and the green will no longer support a quality bentgrass much less a well-hit golf shot," he wrote in the club's newsletter.

At Columbia, George Thompson builds good temporary greens in the fall, top-dressing and seeding them with rye grass so that the members will more readily accept them when their use becomes necessary.

"We shouldn't let a few winter golfers spoil the greens for the greater number of members who want to enjoy good greens in the spring," he contends.

At Kenwood, where temporary greens - and tees - are used all winter regardless of any thawing, members have divided opinions.


"I don't mind them," says Jack Weber, with support from Perry Lippitt.

"If I can't play the regular greens," says Fred Parson, "I don't play at all."

The final word, of course, belongs to Kenwood superintendent John Henley and Woodmont's superintendent John Henley and Kenwood's (Continued on page 2)
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Nick Carosi, green chairman: "If we use the greens now, we'll be sorry in June and July."

At courses which do keep the greens open when the surfaces are frozen, it becomes a day-to-day and sometimes hour-to-hour decision on whether there has been sufficient thawing to require their being taken out of play. And even when play is allowed on the greens, some courses resort to using two holes on each green, with the flagstick being switched from one hole to the other by the foursome. This cuts down the amount of traffic around the holes.

Even where greens are open, they must be guarded from damage caused by walking on them when they are cover with morning frost. In that case, as happened at Bethesda and other courses this week, the entire course is closed until the frost is gone. Reprint from the Montgomery Journal.

April 14th Meeting
Talbot C.C.
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In the clubhouse to see to your wellbeing is Pat Bodder, club manager. Pat assures us an enjoyable evening at the club with good food and cash bar.

The club prefers that everyone pay as you go, so come prepared to pay cash for everything.

Program for the Day:
Golf after 11:00 a.m. - Carts-$12.00
Lunch at the grill - Cash
Cocktails - 5:00 p.m.
Dinner - 6:30 p.m. - $12.00
Speaker: Jack Murray USDA Beltsville Research

Directions to the Club: From the Bay Bridge, go south on Rt. 50 to the Airport on Rt. 333. Cross Peach Blossom Bridge and the third road to the right will be Country Club Drive, which will lead to the Clubhouse.
Beginning Handicaps - 1981

Allen, Harry 9
Baker, Fred 12
Barefoot, Paul 40
Bayor, Greg 24
Braun, Ken 20
Burckholder, L. M. 20
Cammarota, Dave 40
Claffey, Mike 40
Deiter, Lee 40
Drew, John 40
Dyke, Gene 23
Emanuel, Joe 23
Emerson, Bill 16
Evans, Ray 40
Evans, Wayne 40
Fairbanks, Dave 29
Frank, Merrill 21
Gerard, Gerry 35
Hall, Ron 14
Haske, Tom 36
Heinlen, Fred 20
Helm, Dick 21
Kessel, Sam 19
Kroll, Dave 12
Lambert, Robert 36
Larsen, Michael 40
Lawson, Stanley 22
List, Tom 27
Mason, Earl 17
McKenzie, Mike 32
McNeal, Ralph 40
Midkiff, Ray 34
Miller, Bob 16
Montecalvo, Jack 13
Montross, Walter 22
Nash, Steve 22
Neus, Bill 28
O'Leary, Paul 9
Olinger, Cliff 20
Orazi, Bob 18
Parr, Harold 12
Pensinger, Grant 18
Robine, Jerome 30
Robinson, Virgil 13
Rudinski, Lou 40
Shirk, Frank 9
Staffieri, Frank 26
Stagg, Ben 27
Strouth, Ralph 37
Thompson, George 27
Tutich, John 24
Watson, Al 25
Witt, Mike 34
Whetsell, Buck 24
White, Lou 29

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<td>Buchanan, Bill 12</td>
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Handicaps where determined by averaging 1980 scores. Where only one score has been submitted it stands as the handicap score.
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