

What Do Your Green Men Know?

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WHEN you visit a strange course the first thing you inspect is the greens; and what you see tells you that the man who cares for a certain green is educated along that particular line of work, or that he has missed his calling. In the latter case perhaps the greenkeeper is at fault for not starting this man out right.

If this green man does not know his business or is not interested in the greens that are intrusted to his care, you will see a green that is brown and worn around the outer edge and you will see that it has been cut unevenly by a mower that has not been properly adjusted and there are skips caused by not overlapping, tiny brown spots where the oil has dripped from his machine, and weeds and more weeds. Possibly you will see where a few weeds have been taken out. It will be plain enough for there is the big hole that would be a fine place to set the cup.

It is very easy to at once spot the work of a green man who is not so expert—What's the answer? Who is to blame, the green man or the greenkeeper? The greenkeeper must take the blame, for it is up to him personally to instruct his green men. He must get out and demonstrate just how it should be done and why.

I well remember my first job on a golf course some twelve years ago. The greenkeeper gave me a machine and told me the numbers of the greens I was to care for. One of the green men showed me where to go and all I found out was what I learned from him. After cutting three greens I was nearly ready to quit. The grass was long and the mower was adjusted too tight and it seemed

that what I thought was going to be a fairly easy job was turning out rather tough. But I thought I would like the work and it was not long before things became better. The point is that no one told me anything about the work I was going to do. The second day the greenkeeper came around and asked if everything was all right, and I supposed it was, for it seemed that way to him. If a man is started out that way, he will either get interested in his work and make things better for the club members and himself or he will hang on a few weeks and quit. Then a new man will go through the same process and the green suffers as well as the greenkeeper and the members. So give the new man a little of your time. He will be more satisfied and will give you more and better work.

Choosing and Instructing a Green Man

A good green man must be strong and able to move about quickly—not old—and above all he must be interested in his work. Give him certain greens and if he proves okeh, keep him on those greens. If he likes the work, he loses interest if he is moved about from green to green.

In a week you will know if he is the right man. The first thing he must learn, is to know his machine. Let him take it apart and clean it, show him about oiling and how little it takes to keep it properly lubricated. Have him wipe the mower clean after oiling so it will not drip on the green and leave those brown oil spots. Show him how to adjust the cutting bar and impress upon him the importance of always having it properly adjusted so it will do a clean smooth job. Now get him out on the green. Tell him about making two cuts around the outer edge of the green, then a straight cut across the green and when he gets to the edge impress him with the idea of raising the mower slightly, running it off the green for turning and getting a straight cut started for the other side. How much more beautiful a green looks that has a straight clean cut compared to a cut that zig-zags and skips. He must be sure and overlap enough so not to leave a ridge. The grass box should be emptied when half full, especially if the grass is wet. Show him how to push the mower so he can make a straight cut. I've seen men pushing a mower at arm's length, as though they were trying to get it as far away from them



Looking toward Number 5 green and Number 6 tee at
Groesbeck Municipal Golf Links, Lansing, Michigan

as possible and the result is always the same—a zigzag uneven cut. The handle should be well up to the body and the elbows well back to have perfect control of the mower. If he has to mow when the green is wet and there are worm casts, the roller must be cleaned every round. If possible avoid cutting the greens when wet, but if you must do so, go over them with a pole after cutting and scatter the small bunches of wet grass. In moving the machine from one green to another, have him pick out the smoothest route, thereby prolonging the life of the mower. When the new man gets broken in, have him cut the green as fast as possible. He will do a cleaner job and the mower will work easier when pushed along at a steady pace—a good fast man will cut his green quickly and not mark it in the least, whereas a slow plodding man will leave his mark every time. Some greenkeepers will not let a man adjust a machine that he uses every day. In fact I once knew a green man who had used a machine all season and could not adjust it. If anything went wrong this man would have to run all over the course looking for the foreman, so he could get things working again. I say that if a green man is not trustworthy enough to adjust a machine that he uses every day, it is time he was shifted to another job. The mower should be adjusted after cutting each green, if you want every green uniform.

Weeding

This is one job that I believe has been sadly neglected. Not that they didn't get the weeds out, but how they got them out. Have you ever seen a gang of men or boys weeding a green? Some have pocket knives, some butcher knives, some table knives and, with apologies to Heinz, I think there must be "57 varieties."

In bent greens I've found that the majority of weeds cause little trouble—close cutting takes care of them. But those weeds deserving immediate attention are dandelion and chickweed—and the chickweed must come out first. One thing I impress on my green men, is that they must get the chickweed or it will get them and the green also. Chickweed is easy if you get it under control the very first thing in the spring. Then it shows up very clearly and is easy to see before the grass starts its heavy growth. I've found that an ordinary three tined kitchen fork is the ideal tool for removing chickweed. With a fork a fair sized patch of chickweed can be removed and hardly leave a mark.

As you all know, in a small patch of chickweed the main root is in the center of the plant and runners radiate from this center making a circular patch, so that all that is necessary is to take your fork and loosen the outside runner up and out of the grass. Go clear around the weed and be sure that you raise every runner, until you have them all up in a bunch. Now push your fork under the center root and give it a slight twist to loosen the root, then the whole weed can be lifted out, hardly

leaving a mark. A little patience and hard work in the early spring will practically eliminate the weed for the season. We have so little chickweed in our greens at the present time (June 25), that it hardly pays to look for it. So when the men are mowing and happen to see a small patch, they stop right then and get it out. I believe the most disagreeable sight a greenkeeper can imagine, is a green filled with those circular spots of chickweed anywhere from an inch to a foot in diameter. And when they reach the latter stage, you may as well put in a new green, for you would have to tear the green up to get the weed out. So I advise any new greenkeeper and especially so if he has new greens, to get the chickweed and get it quick or it will get the green. It is practically impossible to completely eliminate dandelion. But if your green is at the stage where you can spot this weed only now and then, you can be satisfied.

Weeding is a continuous job and the green man must be impressed with the fact that he must keep everlastingly at it. There can be no let up.

I believe, mowing his greens, weeding and caring for his machine is the important job of the green man, but he should also be able to properly care for his approaches and traps and know how to top dress a green and why. In fact he should know all about every operation on and around his greens. And, if he is the right man for the job and has been properly instructed, he will not only save the club money, but he will help keep the members smiling about their fine greens and last, but not least, he will save the greenkeeper trouble and worry.

How Many Green Men and What They Do

On ordinary grass greens, I believe three or four greens will keep a man busy. But on Bent greens, one man can properly care for six greens. Here we have bent greens and three green men. Each man cares for six greens. Here's the way one man handles his six greens. Starting at 6:00 a.m. he oils his machine, which has been properly adjusted the preceding day after he finished cutting his greens. He then takes his machine and pole and goes to his first green, leaves his machine there and starts poling his greens. As he goes from one green to another, he changes the water in the tee boxes (the water is changed every morning). He also cleans up paper around the tee. In about one hour he has his greens all poled and by that time his first green is ready to cut. He usually has his six greens cut by 10:30 a.m. These are average size greens. He then thoroughly cleans his mower and gets it properly adjusted for the next morning. Then until noon he cleans up around his greens or weeds. After lunch he rakes his bunkers. Each man has about sixteen bunkers to care for. After the bunkers are finished, he weeds or does some special work until quitting time. Twice a week after his greens

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are cut, he mows the approaches and trims around the greens and tees. Once a week he rolls his greens.

I might also add that we have two tractor men, a night water man and two extra men for odd jobs. Either of these extra men can care for greens, if necessary. One of the tractor men is the foreman and he also can change the cup when necessary. One of the green men and one of the extra men can run a tractor, if necessary, and one of the extra men can handle the night water job, if needed.

When it comes to topdressing the greens, every man gets on the job and it seldom takes more than a day and a half. The topdressing is screened and hauled to all the greens in one day. The next day we start spreading the topdressing. As soon as that is done on one green, the Sulphate of Ammonia is broadcast on top of the dressing. Then it is dragged in with a steel mat and watered. I believe this is a much quicker way and I have found it just as satisfactory as mixing the ammonia and then putting it on. This course is three years old and most of the original men are still here and they all pull together. I believe it pays to inform your men and help them in every possible way, for it will come back to you in the form of more and better work and everybody will be happy and contented.

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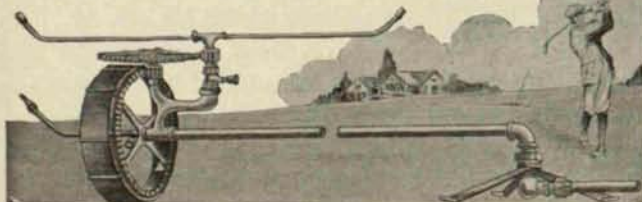
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