After the Constructor—What?

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In these days when new golf courses are coming into being in such steady and quick succession, it may not be amiss to consider for a moment the greenkeeper in relation to the strictly new course. There must be many who may have been in our greenkeeping profession for years and years without having been called upon to take over a brand new course and these many can probably be called fortunate, for the entirely new proposition confronts the greenkeeper with a thousand and one new problems, the handling of which will prove decidedly more of a tax than the mere maintenance of an already established course.

And exactly so it is with the new golf course. The constructor's job entirely completed, there remains many an essential to be taken care of before the course is ready for play and still many more before the course is sturdily established and capable of being maintained on anything approaching an accurate budget.

The Training of Greensmen

The first problem facing the greenkeeper is the labor one. If he is fortunate enough to be in a neighborhood where other golf courses flourish, he may secure a number of experienced greensmen. His problem would in such a case, of course, be very greatly simplified, but even so he will, for a while at least, have to give considerable time to personal supervision, until he has all his greensmen working exactly according to his own particular methods. If circumstances compel the greenkeeper to employ local labor and he finds it wholly untrained, he must then carefully choose his men, and

A winter view of Number 15 green at Progress Country Club.
proceed carefully to train them. This will make an
exacting demand on both his time and his patience—
good greensmen are not made in a day—indeed, I some-
times think that good greensmen are born, not made.

Equipment, Repair Shop and Storage

Having lined up his gang, the greenkeeper turns his
attention to equipment. The constructor has probably
bequeathed him a scarred and well-worn tractor and pos-
sibly a fairway unit. Those will doubtless have to be
overhauled and there will be putting-green mowers to
select. The question of housing of equipment is one that
very often receives sadly scant attention and the green-
keeper may find nothing more than an inadequate,
weather-worn shack assigned him as an equipment shed.
He would be well to insist at the outset on a sound,
satisfactory building for this purpose, including a repair
shop for machinery equipped with lathe, grinder, drills,
etc. The equipment shed should be of such size as will
allow for the winter job of repainting equipment, tee-
boxes, markers, etc., and the greenkeeper must also have
dry-room storage for seed and such commercial ferti-
lizers as sulphate of ammonia. The ideal equipment
storage building will, naturally, be furnace heated.

Road Construction

The golf course constructor is not naturally, perhaps,
concerned greatly with ways and means of maintenance
and it is unlikely that he has troubled to make roadways
and tracks over which the tractors may be taken from
one fairway to another. The making of these tracks
will be one of the new greenkeeper's earliest tasks.

Starting Nursery and Compost Pile

On a new course there will be seldom, if ever, a sod
nursery already prepared. The greenkeeper will have to
choose a good location for this—somewhere well out of
the line of play and then extend a water-line to the site.
The compost pile, too, will seldom be already started,
and the making of a new one will claim the green-
keeper's immediate attention.

Cleaning Up the Fairways and Rough

If the constructor has been pressed for time—and he
always, always is—there will probably be tree-stumps
here and there that have yet to be removed. After a
season's frost, many stones will make their appearance on
the fairways and throughout the season the weight of
the tractor mowers passing over and over the ground
will cause still more stones, or rocks, or boulders, to
show up. This business of getting rid of stones, rocks,
stumps, etc. will of a surety absorb a good deal of time
for perhaps a couple of seasons.

And again the rough areas of the course may have re-
ceived little or no attention at the hands of the con-
structor, and if those are to be cut by a rough-machine,
then the greenkeeper no doubt will find quite a number
of boulders and rocks there that must perforce be re-
moved.

Laying Extra Drain Tile

One of the most important of the new problems for
the greenkeeper will be drainage. While a certain amount
of drainage work will undoubtedly have been done by the
constructor, there will still be a great deal more drainage
work to be done in the first year or so, and the green-
keeper, by reason of his constant observation and atten-
tion, ought to be the one to know best where drain lines
ought to be laid. Spring and autumn seepages and
summer rains will reveal to the greenkeeper where the
water is to gather and only after a full round of the
seasons will he be in a position to know exactly what he
will be called upon to do in the way of drainage work.

Grading and Finishing Touches

Very frequently on his new course the greenkeeper
will encounter steep grades at the backs of greens and
the sides of tees. Such grades are, of course, hard to
maintain and he will be called upon to remedy such
defects by grading. Around traps, too, he will in all
probability find that he really must put more of an
“edge” than has been left by the constructor—this to
prevent surface water from pouring into the traps.
And so on, such extra jobs as those enumerated above
will absorb the new greenkeeper's care, attention, and
time throughout his first and possibly his second sea-
son—and only after they have been taken care of will
he be able to settle down to more or less routine main-
tenance.

Perfecting the Putting Greens

While those manifold “extras” have been receiving his
attention, the greenkeeper will be occupied with the all
important task of bringing his putting-greens up to
standard. It is comparatively easy for the constructor
to get a good “catch” of grass, since he merely has to
sow the seed and let the grass grow naturally, but it
turns out that the period of the constructor's care is the
only time when the grass will really be allowed to remain
in its natural state. When the greenkeeper arrives on
the scene he begins the constant cutting of the greens
and then it is only by his assiduous care and judicious
application of top-dressing, with persistent attention to
the matter of weeding, that the greens will be brought to
the stage of perfect putting surface and maintained as
such.