

The Greenkeeper's Job

By JOHN R. INGLIS

Fairview Country Club, Elmsford, N. Y.

PERHAPS it is not to be expected that all who play golf should find the maintaining of the golf course a matter of absorbing interest. It is surprising, however, how very few there are, out of the several hundred members of a golf club, who bestow even the most cursory attention on the really vital matter of keeping the course in the condition which affords them their golfing pleasure.

The Green committee, to be sure, is aware of the hundred and one items that must come under the heading of maintenance, but even Green committees seem prone to allow the bulk of the committee work to fall on the shoulders of the chairman. And to whom does the Green chairman look for the successful condition of the course? To one man—the greenkeeper, on whom rests the entire burden of keeping the course in such shape as will afford every player the greatest possible enjoyment from every round played—which, it may justly be claimed, is no mean task.

What, other than keeping the grass at proper playing height on greens, tees, fairways, and rough, constitutes a greenkeeper's work? Well, while grass cutting occupies considerable time during Spring and Summer, it is, really, the least of the greenkeeper's worries. Power mowers have, of course, simplified the grass cutting business everywhere on fairways and rough, and in many instances they are now used on greens and tees, but then these important items of equipment demand on the part of the greenkeeper a knowledge of tractor and mower mechanism. Tractors, for example, during the season of quick grass growth, are run from ten to thirteen hours a day, all in second speed, and this strain on machinery calls for constant expert care.

At that, grass cutting is not merely a matter of sending a machine out to do the work—season and weather conditions call for adjustment of these machines at various heights, and in this the greenkeeper must know just what is right for all conditions. Subjected to this constant hard usage steadily throughout the season, all golf course machinery and equipment has to be thoroughly overhauled during the winter months—worn bearings, reels, etc., replaced, knives ground, and so on, and the whole repainted in readiness for next season—and during overhauling the greenkeeper must make a careful inspection of each machine.



John R. Inglis has been professional-greenkeeper at Fairview Country Club for over 20 years. Under his direction Fairview has been unique as a training school for successful golfers, among whom are numbered Johnnie Farrell, National Open Champion, Joe Turnesa, Elmsford, N. Y., Joe Mathews, Merton Matthews and John Madden, all of Kansas City, Walter Madden, St. Joseph, Mo., Louis Costello, Broadmoor, N. Y., and Fred Decker, Knollwood, N. Y.

Cutting is not the only care needed on greens during summer. Periodic top-dressing has to be done—this is merely the artificial feeding and “pepping up” of the greens weakened by constant cutting, exacting weather conditions, and heavy playing traffic throughout the busy summer season.

During the summer months, too, the greenkeeper has to turn out as something of a chemist. Our summer climate often proves a very severe strain and test for golf course turf, and grass disease is very rarely wholly absent all of one season. Preventives and remedies, any number of them, are on the market, but all of them call for quite a bit of skill and knowledge as to their application. Their composition and action must be known to the greenkeeper, and he is called upon in

each individual case to exercise his own judgment as to their application—when to apply, in what manner, and at what strength, etc., etc.

Throughout all his work the greenkeeper is shouldering the responsibility of handling labor, more or less skilled. Time was when golf course labor was virtually casual, but the tendency of recent years has been to standard-

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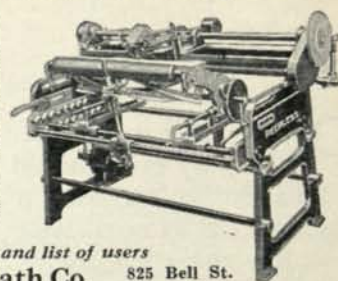
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ize golf course employment as a specific occupation. Skilled greensmen, however, are not yet plentiful enough to relieve the greenkeeper of much care and concern in the training and retaining of good workmen. Here in the east, for instance, the greenkeeper employs a more or less cosmopolitan gang, and frequently their training and handling is something that taxes patience, forbearance, and executive ability.

Summing it all up, the man who has to maintain, in excellent playing condition, the golf course of today, has a worthwhile, though exacting job, on his hands. His varied activities, of course, prevent his coming in contact with the majority of club members—that being a privilege which the professional, on the other hand, does enjoy through the very nature of his work.

In estimating the importance of the greenkeeper in the field of present day golf, it may be argued that club members spend about three and one half hours right in the greenkeeper's department each time they play a round of golf, so that, working it out comparatively, golfers are really greatly indebted to the greenkeeper for the enjoyment they derive from their golf game, and the return they get from country club membership. The steward may provide an excellent lunch, the professional may evolve a perfect style, but the golf course is what gives the player the greatest pleasure in any golfer's day.

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