

Turf For Tennis Champions

How an expert Greenkeeper has kept everybody happy under most trying conditions of weather and play. Temperament plays an important part

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THE general care of grass tennis courts is not different from the care of golf greens.

However, tennis courts require a firmer texture than golf greens. They receive harder usage, hence more elbow-grease is necessary to maintain them in an A-1 condition. Nor are there any different principles involved in their construction, for the same laws of nature prevail as on the golf course.

Where *poa annua* prevails some forethought is necessary in order to have good hot weather courts. We therefore give them a rather heavy seeding of *poa gracilis*, *agrostis alba*, and *rubra falox*, in order to play safe in case of a hot, dry summer.

When the season opens, the results of your fall, winter and spring work is evident, for your grass-courts look pretty good to you. Therefore it is with pride and contentment that you settle down to watch the start of a tournament.

Your men are on hand to roll after each set is played, and to raise any depressions made during the play, and also to plug the exceptionally bad divots, which become more noticeable as the tournament progresses. Therefore, it isn't very long until your spirit saddens, for a beginner's mashie was never anything in comparison to the damage caused by these over-zealous, cleat-shod players, each and every one with his eyes on a piece of pewter and the sports column.

After a week's play the finals are reached, also the end of your good nature, for you have

put enough plugs into the courts to plug this free country bone-dry and you have done more rolling than a clipper-ship going around the "Horn," and you, as well as the courts, look like a shop-worn meal ticket.

It is sometimes necessary to shift play to the adjoining court. We, therefore, where space permits, start play on courts one, three, five, etc., later shifting to two, four, six, etc., but not unless the original courts are too worn for play; for one must take one's own club members into consideration, and satisfy those who sign the pay check. "Kicks" and dissatisfaction are eliminated with good feeling taking its place, by detaining this shift until after the tournament.

Where space is at a premium some ground may be saved by using the left hand side line of court No. 1 for the right hand side line of court No. 2, but only when using the shift system, for elbow room is needed and cramped tennis courts show poor architecture and knowledge of the



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Crayon sketch by Axel Linus, Chicago

game.

After a large tournament it is often necessary to perforate the congealed soil by forking, this being caused by too excessive play and rolling, and also to sod the worn service lines. If time allows, a liberal seeding does no harm, and of course feeding and top-dressing.

We try to avoid heavy rolling until shortly before a tournament in order to create, what is very essential, a good nap. This, to a certain degree, depends upon the nature of the soil. A vigorous, healthy grass cannot be produced by excessive rolling on heavy soils.

Clay Courts

THE building and handling of a clay court is a different proposition, for in this style of a court one eliminates capillary action as much as possible in order to assure a quick drying court by laying tile and underlaying the clay surface with a layer of cinders. But, crushed stone or pebbles are not advisable because they will eventually work to the surface, creating unnecessary labor later on.

Let me take the liberty of digressing a little from the subject under discussion, this, however, being prompted through my observation of our grass-tennis courts. A good deal has been written about the effect of lime upon clover, it being generally understood that lime encouraged same, that lime creates an alkaline condition and sweetens the soil—just what clover likes.

The basic element of our marking whiting is lime and this we apply practically every day. Many of these lines run through thick patches of clover, and now, after these lines have been erased by rains, top dressing, etc., one can see where they have been, through the elimination of the clover. Upon closer examination you will find that not a clover is left in these lines, but very thick right up to them. What is the answer?

A Little Psychology

I CANNOT help relating an incident that happened last summer during one of our larger tournaments—an incident where psychology plays a leading part. I was introduced to one of the best known tennis players in America by the Chairman of the tournament, who said:

“Now Mr. Blank is not kicking, no indeed, for he isn't that kind of a fellow, but he complains about court No. 4.”

Upon questioning the gentleman he said that there seemed to be undulations in this court, causing bad bounds.

I felt at the time that psychology was playing a trick, but I looked wise and promised to have the fault corrected—but did nothing. Next day Mr. Blank happened to use the very court in question and upon the completion of his sets I asked point blank: “What do you

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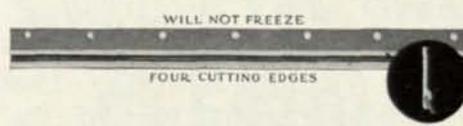
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think of the court to-day?” and his answer was “It couldn't be better. What in the world did you do to it?”

Temperament, that's what it was; the bigger they are the more temperament they generally have, and personally I think it is a good thing for the game. And it would be a good thing for greenkeepers in general to get some of this stuff, even if it does border on the psychic, for through it they will stop being yes-men.

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