

Chasing Brown Patch Is Not All

By ALBERT BROWN, *Pro-greenkeeper*

Lido Country Club, Long Beach, L. I.

CHASING brown patch is not all there is to greenkeeping. Despite the fact that the name "greenkeeper" is apt to be misleading to those of the general public who have just recently aspired to become golfers, they must not forget that there are other duties on the course and many of them are perhaps of more importance to the golfers who financially support the clubs and courses.

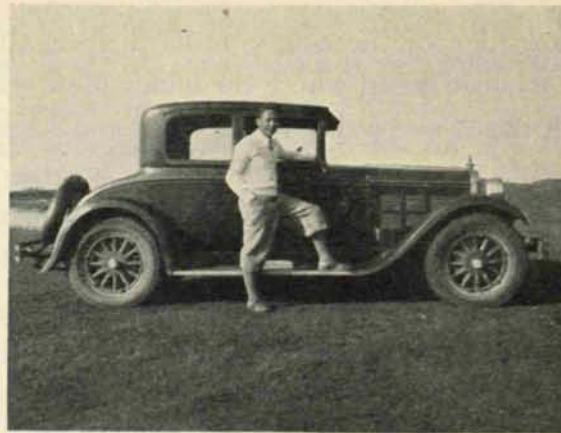
The business of greenkeeping has at last won recognition and universal respect from the golf clubs and players of America. We believe an employee of a club who is responsible for the spending of from fifteen thousand to twenty-five thousand of dollars per year toward keeping the golf course in playing condition must fill an important position.

The National Association of Greenkeepers of America composed of a body of men of proven worth and intelligence certainly has a great future, for, as we see it this is only the beginning. Not one of us knows it all, nor perhaps ever will but with free discussion we will make some progress.



THE OCEAN BEACH IS FAMOUS AT LIDO

Flanking the beach are the lawns and the practice putting green with an area of 130,000 square feet planted to Washington bent stolons



THE AUTHOR

Personally, I think the subject of brown patch has been overstrained during the last year, and, although very serious in itself it may overshadow the real work in hand of which as we all know there is abundance. We all have our worries from the usual kickers (of course passed on to us by the chairman of the Green committee or the secretary—bless their souls), on the rough being too rough or the pits too difficult for them. The greens too fast or the greens too slow, is a subject everlasting with the alibi golfers from coast to coast, but it is all in the game of golf for the player who is on the losing end the world over.

MY PROBLEMS ARE LIKE ALL OTHERS

GETTING down to my own local conditions here at Lido on Long Island I may say that my maintenance problems hardly differ from what they would be in Maine or Missouri, Michigan or Maryland. We mow our greens nearly every day including Sunday and the fairways twice each week. Our course is built on a sand bar with a six-inch layer of farm top soil on fairways and greens. The so-called rough is the natural sand itself, shaped up into mounds and hummocks to give it character, planted with tufts of coarse sea grass and having the appearance of natural seaside sand dunes. This is an ideal condition for natural hazards as it is thin enough to find balls easy but extremely difficult to play a good shot

from. Of course this condition is only possible on sand, gravel or very sterile soil.

One edge of the course is hard up against the Atlantic ocean where the winds blow quite fresh about every day in the year and I mention this fact for the benefit of you fungus experts who believe that fungus or brown patch is native to dismal swamps and forest glades.

We have had small brown patch on eighteen greens the last two years and plenty of it and although the course is as I explained close to the sea, we have great variety of contour and a few elevated greens. Our highest greens seemed to be in every way quite as susceptible to disease as those lying only four feet above high water mark.

I might mention that our turf is composed of red fescue, Rhode Island bent, Seaside bent and Poa Annua (curse it). Every green is large, not one being less than ten thousand square feet with three of them fifteen thousand feet. Quite an area to maintain.

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Of course this eternal brown patch subject has to crop up again and at the time Brothers Morley and MacGregor so kindly visited me this summer I was quite optimistic over the outlook. I mentioned the fact that although we had been able to control it very readily with calomel-bi-chlorate combination and broadcast (with a suitable quantity of topdressing), by the dry method, still there must be something wrong with our modern methods of fertilizing.

The fact is that the low-lying areas of fairway which I had reason to believe were in a high state of acidity seemed to develop brown patch at the same time as did the putting greens. Now these fairways had not been fertilized for twelve years and had just got natur-

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ally sour on the low spots, and it seemed reasonable that the greens were in a similar condition, probably through the continued use of acid reacting fertilizer.

A series of tests made recently showed the infected areas in an acid condition and I have already taken steps to bring them back to a more neutral state. I would advise every greenkeeper to possess a soil testing outfit and acquaint himself as to its use.

ABOUT THE SIZE OF GREENS

DURING Convention week in Detroit last year many interesting subjects were discussed both in session and private argument which is all for the common good. One of them was about the area of the average green. Now this is an important subject and one that Green committees are vitally interested in for it means quite a difference in the budget of a club whether the greens will be six thousand or ten thousand square feet area. Of course local conditions determine to a great extent the playing area for the shape of a green will sometimes determine the size it should be.

A green with a rim all around the back and sides which is very common nowadays can afford to be made quite small compared to one that is flat. Then again a green which is soft and heavy or in a low spot can be made quite small as against one which dries out very easily and is always fast to putt or pitch on, which must be made large.

Contrary to the opinion of some golf architects the length of a golf hole does not very often determine the size of the green.

A greenkeeper will often wonder how fast to have the putting surface or what standards to maintain, especially if he himself is not a golfer. Very often the chairman of the Green committee knows less about the matter than he does. Of course if he has velvet bent turf he has no choice with such a dwarf grass. Personally, I don't care for velvet bent greens to putt on as they are too fast for consistent putting and require a bigger putting surface.

We have entertained quite a few leading

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golfers over this course during the past seven years in championships, near championships and open tournaments and most of them, both amateurs and professionals, preferred slow greens.

POWER MOWERS PROVE ECONOMICAL

DURING the past summer we have very successfully used 24-inch power putting green mowers and would urge greenkeepers to give them a trial even if only to supplement their hand machine work. They are real money savers and make a real good job of cutting.

The maintenance of the so-called rough is another bone of contention with our friends the average dubs.

The rules of the game of golf mention only four parts of a course—fairway, putting green, teeing ground and hazards. A hazard is any bunker (sand pit), water (except casual water), ditch (unless excepted by local rule), bush, sand, path or road. Sand blown onto the course or sprinkled on the grass for its preservation, bare patches, sheep tracks, snow and

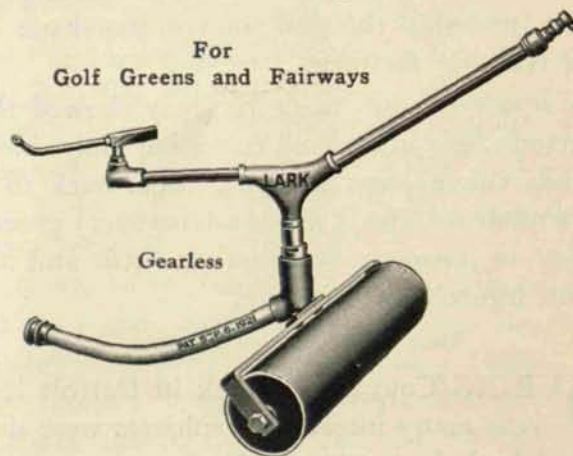
ice are not hazards. Long grass is not a hazard.

I suppose most of you greenkeepers don't see how it is possible to have a good course without rough. This course (Lido) is famous for its rough, in fact so famous that most players don't want to play it again, although we have thinned it out considerably the last two years. Two golf courses I know of (real good championship courses, too), have no rough—St. Andrews, Scotland, where Bobby Jones won the British Open, and Lakeside, California.

I believe that a course which requires acres of bluegrass hay in order to keep the scoring high is badly in need of a good golf course architect immediately, so by all means get rid of your rough grass and keep it short. Mowing machines and tractors don't cost much nowadays. All this goes to show, brother greenkeepers, that we have other duties to perform besides chasing brown patch, so let us work together and get rid of it.

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