

Winter Play on Permanent Greens

By PROF. LAWRENCE S. DICKINSON

Massachusetts Agricultural College, Amherst, Mass.

A MINORITY of the club members aided and encouraged by a winter playing Green chairman, frequently cause the Board of Directors to vote to play permanent greens during the winter.

Without discussing the merits of the vote the fact is the vote has been passed, and the greenkeeper has been told the sad news. That vote should affect the winter maintenance program of work and should cause an increase in the maintenance budget.

Undoubtedly many putting greens are permanently injured by the combination of winter play and incompetent maintenance. Incompetent maintenance is more often caused by failure to realize just what is happening to the turf than to lack of ability.

FALSE ECONOMY COSTS MONEY

THERE is another factor helping to cause winter injury to the greens; that is the feeling of hesitancy to spend money for winter care. Green committees are more often hesitant than the greenkeeper, but whoever hesitates is practicing false economy if a certain standard of turf quality is to be maintained. It requires much more money to repair winter injured turf than to properly maintain it during the winter.

Dormant turf cannot overcome injury from the rubbing and tearing by players' shoes, because it isn't growing. The injury thus caused becomes cumulative during the late fall and winter, while during the growing season the grass keeps ahead of the injury unless traffic is very heavy.

CUPS SHOULD BE CHANGED FREQUENTLY

THE accumulation of wearing injury necessitates more frequent changing of the cups during the late fall and winter (if shallow frost permits). As the time of changing the cup is governed by the number of players using the green, the above means that fewer rounds should be played between cup changes. Cold days and a warm shop are great influences causing a green-

keeper to fail to realize the number of players on the course.

Unfortunately the winter playing golfers frequently insist on having the cup placed within the ideal cupping area. The cupping area is used continuously during the summer, and to add winter use is expecting too much from the turf. It would seem that if the winter golfers were acquainted with the facts they would be willing to at least play to cups set outside the real cupping area. Winter golf is more exercise and luck than side bets and skill.

Play on days that surface thawing takes place is particularly hard on the turf and during the period of the annual "January thaw" the greens should be absolutely closed to play.

Greens having a southern exposure are more likely to be injured by winter play than those having a northern exposure. The injury is particularly aggravated during the late winter. Grass tissues can withstand very cold temperatures and slow freezing and thawing are seldom injurious. Rapid thawing causes the bursting of many of the leaf's tissues and the combination of physical wear and burst leaf tissue is very injurious, if not deadly, to the grass.

COVERING OF BRANCHES HELPS

A COVERING of branches placed on the early and rapidly thawed greens will very often more than repay the cost with fine quality turf. Furthermore the early greens are held back so that all greens come into playing condition at nearly the same time. This is a decided advantage.

It should be distinctly understood by Green committees, finance committees, and boards of governors that winter play on most permanent greens located north of the latitude of Washington, D. C., is an expensive privilege that is enjoyed by a small percentage of the clubs' playing membership. If that is understood, funds should be provided for the winter maintenance of the greens.