The Battle of 1931

A resume of what the greenkeepers fought for and won. A season of unusual climatic conditions

By JAMES A. SMITH

The season of 1931 will always be remembered by those who have been responsible for the maintenance of turf upon golf greens. The brunt of the fight has naturally fallen upon the greenkeepers and that they were ready and could stand punishment has been satisfactorily proven. Heat and humidity seemed constant during the nights of the past summer and while these conditions existed their work received their constant attention.

Such climatic conditions brought on trouble with which they were familiar. The symptoms were at once recognized, the remedy was known and the trouble was quickly under control. There never was any doubt of the outcome because now the better class of greenkeepers are men educated for this or any similar type of battle.

This year even the fairways required scientific attention. The trouble was new to most of them but they knew where and how to get the information they needed in this emergency. With a suggestion as to proper treatment, they were familiar with the method of application, of the proper medication and where treatments could be applied, results were entirely successful.

The greenkeepers have won what appears to have been their first great battle, by their eagerness to educate themselves.

Will they get all the credit they so richly deserve for this fight? Ten years ago the fight would have been lost as quickly as it started.

That the greenkeeper is now an educated, thinking man is evidenced by the following reasons which have been given by them for their trouble this year. Sit down in the shade of the tool house with one of them and you will be surprised to learn how clearly he is thinking.

**CONDITIONS WHICH FACED THE GREENKEEPERS**

1. Poorly drained greens or those in poorest physical condition suffered most. These are not properly aerated and hold stagnant water often too near the surface. The physical inability of many soils to provide properly digested nourishment is apparent even when supplied with normally, proper feedings because of this lack of aeration.

2. Too closely cut foliage or foliage destroyed by over-medication did not provide sufficient evaporation from the turf to bring up the feedings which might have been prepared for them in the soil below.

3. A few with but a limited knowledge of proper dosage, grew panicky and promptly murdered their greens with poison too freely administered. But few of these greens have as yet fully recovered.

4. Watering at night during the very hot

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weather increased the humidity as well as the fungi. Greens dried out before night. With early morning watering during hot weather, quickly recovered.

5. Balanced feedings during the hot, humid weather, tended to toughen the turf and in a measure make it more nearly brown patch resistant. The most satisfactory complete fertilizer seemed to be the one carrying a heavy percentage of Phosphorus with comparatively light Potash additions. The nitrogen percentage seemed safe if it equalled the total of phosphorus and potash.

6. After improper drainage as well as improper physical condition, a growing tendency to over nitrate feeding was the prime cause for serious trouble. Delicate foliage on turf was grown at a time when a strong, vigorous turf was most needed. Heavy nitrate feedings from Ammonium Sulphate or from one of the organic feedings which during hot, moist weather, could break down by putrefaction and
become too readily available, should be watched more closely at that season.

7. Over stimulation to foliage development, because of this one-sided fertilization should be classed as one of the major causes for the extent and duration of the fungus attacks. Where the feeding balance was maintained, this over-stimulation was impossible.

8. Deep and rather infrequent watering with the best available sprinkling equipment, with hand watering of the greens edges.

9. Seeding fairways to turf which the soil most easily grows rather than trying to compel it to grow one unsuited to the soil conditions in which it must exist.

10. Another year with the knowledge they now have and with funds available, the webworm will be less of a menace and should be controlled.

These and many more are actual suggestions from greenkeepers I have had the pleasure of hearing this summer. There will be many new problems possibly in 1932, but if they are thinking straight and as directly as they are, we need have no fear of the future so far as their responsibility is concerned.

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