

# Bettering Maintenance At Small Town Golf Courses

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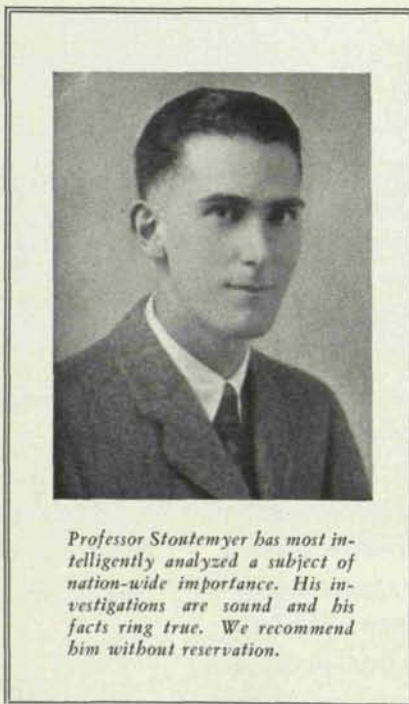
Reprinted from address delivered at the Annual Greenkeepers' Educational Conference in Chicago

THE ancient and honorable game of golf has now become as well established in American life as ham and eggs or Boston baked beans. Golf doubtless has a wider adaptation to people of all ages and classes than most other sports. This explains the rapid spread of the game in the last two or three decades. Wherever the golf bug bites, it bites exceedingly deep and leaves its usual quota of bereaved wives and fatherless families.

While golf has had its largest development in metropolitan districts, there is a strong and growing interest in the smaller towns. The accompanying table shows approximately the present distribution of golf courses in the smaller towns of Iowa, a typically rural state. This list was compiled during the past year and includes regularly organized golf clubs for the most part, with a very few fee and municipal courses. Undoubtedly a number of clubs were overlooked in this survey.

Thus it may be seen that a considerable number of golf courses are found in towns with a small population. It would be erroneous to imagine that very many of these courses are still in the cow pasture stage. A few, it is true, have sand greens and perhaps charge an annual fee of \$10.00 or \$15.00. As a rule the small courses are not operated very long before several grass greens are installed. Eventually the sand is replaced entirely by grass.

Cost studies are of little value in this period of change, but it may be said that during the past few years many small 9-hole clubs have been providing bent grass greens and fairly good playing conditions with some clubhouse facilities for dues of about \$25.00 or \$30.00 per year. Wherever the mainte-



*Professor Stoutemyer has most intelligently analyzed a subject of nation-wide importance. His investigations are sound and his facts ring true. We recommend him without reservation.*

nance is on a somewhat higher level or where the clubhouse facilities are more elaborate this figure may be doubled. These dues, of course, are very small in comparison with those of some of the larger clubs.

## CLUBHOUSE HAS PROVED COSTLY

ONE question which every small town club has to face is the relative prominence which shall be given to golf and to the clubhouse with the usual social activities that cluster around it. Satisfactory golfing facilities may be secured for a very modest sum in the small community, but very often the clubhouse facilities

prove excessively costly for the small golf club.

DISTRIBUTION OF GOLF COURSES IN THE SMALLER TOWNS AND CITIES OF IOWA

Population Range	Number of Towns in State	Number of Towns Having One or More Golf Courses
500- 1,000	196	13
1,000- 1,500	66	28
1,500- 2,000	30	14
2,000- 3,000	34	24
3,000- 4,000	20	20
4,000- 5,000	16	13
5,000-10,000	15	15
Totals	377	127

In some cases during the past season the greenkeeper's budget has been reduced drastically, while large expenditures have been continued for clubhouse equipment. Possibly this trend is the result of a real demand by the membership for the improvement of the clubhouse as a social center. Nevertheless, there are many clubs which would have larger memberships today and be in better financial condition if they had maintained good greens and fairways and had spent less on high-priced crystal and chinaware. If this be true, perhaps the greenkeep-

ers have been too retiring and too modest in their demands for the good of not only themselves but their clubs.

#### COST ANALYSIS

REGARDLESS of the accounting system used by the club officials, the greenkeeper should use a simple cost analysis system of his own. An individual account should be kept for each green and a record should be made of the date of each treatment such as fertilization or topdressing, together with the amount of material used. An estimate of labor cost is useful also and a standard time can be determined and used for each treatment. This will be accurate enough for all practical purposes. Fairway costs can be treated in the same manner.

Where such records have been kept, the variation in the cost of maintenance of the different greens has often been marked. A green with faulty construction is likely to prove expensive in some items, such as fungicides and in the removal and replacement of turf. Thus when a green should be taken out and rebuilt, the greenkeeper has something definite to support the facts presented to his committee. The personal records of the greenkeeper put the facts about the operation of the course in their true light, while the accounts of the club officials are usually too generalized to do this.

#### LAYOUT AND MAINTENANCE

THE small town golf course is apt to have defects in construction, as it is not likely that the course was designed by a competent golf architect. While the layout may be faulty from the standpoint of play, the errors which are most commonly seen are those which interfere with the growing of good turf.

A few common examples may be cited. Sharp rolls in the surface contour of the green necessitate continual cutting from a certain angle. Steep, rough backs or sides of greens cause difficulty with the use of any kind of mower and may require much hard work with a scythe. Certain types of terraced greens and some freak designs in vogue a few years ago have proved unsatisfactory and are being taken out. Greens with rolls placed without due regard to the surface drainage have given endless trouble with scald and brown patch.

There are courses on which the surface water from a long slope runs across the green, or where the seepage from surrounding hills keeps the soil soggy.

Oversized greens on some of the smaller golf

courses are now a costly burden. A large green increases the cost of labor, power, fertilizer, fungicides and every other item of maintenance expense. Greens of over 6,000 square feet are apt to be regretted by the small club. A green need not appear small, but it certainly will do so if it is given a very irregular outline with large sand traps on the approaches. A wide untrapped approach from the front or from one side will help to make the small green playable for the relatively unskilled players who predominate in most clubs.

The situation is quite the reverse with tees. They are often not large enough on the average small course and require much repairing and returfing. Bent grass tees are beautiful but under midwestern conditions require too much care for the small club to consider them.

It may be observed that sand traps and water hazards are often sadly neglected on the smaller courses. Where they have been put in, an effort should be made to maintain them. Probably clubs will be less hasty in placing them over the course in the future. The small town courses should follow some of the ideas in natural and optional hazards which are being used by many municipal and fee courses.

Along with the regular maintenance of the course an effort must be made to keep the grounds neat and attractive. If the club is not in a position to do much planting of nursery stock, even a few well chosen annual and perennial flowers will take little care and the added color will be appreciated by the members. We must never forget that contact with natural beauty is one of the great values of golf.

#### THE GRASS PROBLEM

TAKEN as a whole, the smaller golf clubs of Iowa have made many serious mistakes in the selection of putting green grasses. The vast majority of the greens are in some sort of bent. Only a few of the greens of red fescue remain, and blue grass greens are not much more common.

The early seeded greens were sown to mixed South German bent, and under our conditions the various grasses formed small segregated patches which gave the green a spotted appearance. The early experiences with stolonized greens were even more unsuccessful because of the inferior strains which were being sold at that time as Washington bent.

Spurious grasses are still on hundreds of greens in our state and, in spite of all the efforts of the greenkeeper, remain coarse, nappy, diseased at times and undesirable in color. The dissatisfied players and club officials often do not realize that a mis-named grass is the one and only source of their troubles.

It is well to keep the greens of a course all in one strain of grass; otherwise one has the bother of growing various sorts of grasses for turf repair. Where there are a number of bents on one course they tend to be carried by the mowers and in time become mixed, causing the greens to take on a spotted appearance. The best place for the trial of new grasses is on the practice putting green and a certain amount of such experimentation is to be encouraged.

Some of the new strains resulting from the breeding efforts of the Bureau of Plant Industry and several of the agricultural experiment stations in the East seem to be very promising and may have unusual merit. Trends toward one definite species of bent are noticeable in various regions. The seaside, colonial, creeping and velvet bents each seem to have localities where they thrive best. The old question of seed versus stolons has been revived again because of recent advances in the production of pure strains of seed.

#### CLUB ORGANIZATION AND THE GREENKEEPER

**A**N INTERESTING development in the status of the greenkeeper is found in Iowa and has attracted some attention locally. It is essentially a contract system which increases the responsibility of the greenkeeper and allows him to share directly in the economies which he is able to effect in the use of labor and materials. The greenkeeper thus becomes in a very definite sense a business partner with the club.

This arrangement is found at the Green County Golf Club, a 9-hole course, located at Jefferson, Iowa, and has worked ideally in practice. The club has just completed its fifth season. Most of the present greens are but three years old. They are in Washington bent and are nearly all of a quality worthy of the finest course.

The club pays the greenkeeper a fixed stipend each year. From this he provides his own salary and the necessary additional labor for course maintenance. The greenkeeper also furnishes a tractor, which is practical in this instance as he also operates

a farm. Fertilizer, tools and other materials are furnished by the club. The greenkeeper collects the green fees and by the provisions of his contract is allowed to retain one-fourth of the fee money. As this course does not have a professional golf instructor, he also operates a concession for the sale of golf merchandise.

As the years have passed, more direct authority has been given to the greenkeeper and the club officials have been gratified with the results.

At the start, this greenkeeper was a farmer in the vicinity who took over the job without any previous experience or knowledge of turf culture. By obtaining information from every source and by hard work he has secured unusually good playing conditions. Perhaps the key to the success of this course is disclosed in the statement by the greenkeeper, Mr. C. B. Whitson, that, "A person must be deeply interested in his work to accomplish what the members of the club desire."

#### CLUBHOUSE OPERATED BY SEPARATE ORGANIZATION

**O**NE other unusual feature of this course is that while there is a clubhouse adjoining the grounds it has no direct connection with the golf club organization, as it was erected long before the course was built and operated by another organization. Because of the large number of members in the latter who had no particular interest in golf, the two organizations have cooperated but not united. Thus some of the golfers do not have clubhouse privileges.

The fact that the course does not have the upkeep of a clubhouse explains the very low annual dues of \$20.00 for resident members and \$10.00 for non-residents. The club has a membership of about 140.

#### CONTRACT SYSTEM HAS GOOD FEATURES

**T**HERE are some good features to such a contract system, although the organization would have to vary according to local conditions. Perhaps it is time to get rid of the idea that a greenkeeper is simply another laborer at so many dollars per week or month and strive to effect arrangements whereby he is able, in addition to his fixed salary, to share in the economies which his management secures.

Good greens mean an increase in new members who are attracted by the fine playing conditions on

the course. The attraction of non-resident players is also becoming the financial salvation of many clubs.

Other types and extremes of organization are found also. There are small courses which do not have a greenkeeper in the true sense of the word. The Green chairman, usually a retired business man with some leisure, spends considerable time on the course and directs the labor. While the budget of such a course may show a very low labor cost, the best playing conditions are not apt to result.

#### GOLF COURSE MANAGEMENT

THE basic ideas which have revolutionized the steel industry were worked by Frederick Taylor of Philadelphia over a generation ago. He was virtually the founder of modern ideas of management in industry and practically all of the time studies and "speed up" methods which exist in every industry today were inspired by the astonishing results which he secured.

In later life he frequently said that there were several great duties of a manager. He must develop a science for each operation of work in place of tradition and rule of thumb. He must use care in the selection and development of workers. Furthermore, cooperation must be secured between laborer and employer in order to apply the correct method to the work. In addition, there must be proper supervision.

There is a similar situation in greenkeeping. There is a faster way to pull a weed, topdress a green, or route a fairway mower than most of us are using. A great many useful methods which would make for cheaper and quicker maintenance have never been collected and organized and must be learned from experience or from personal contact with the greenkeepers who are the leaders in their professions. At the points where greenkeeping touches the science of pathology, entomology, agrostology and a dozen others, much information is available. The whole subject is expanding so rapidly that textbooks on greenkeeping soon get out of date.

The men who have charge of the smaller golf courses have sometimes been too isolated to keep in touch with the best information in greenkeeping. The educational work of the various greenkeepers' organizations, the NATIONAL GREENKEEPER, the U. S. G. A. Green section, and the specialized short courses given at a number of the colleges undoubt-

edly is leading to great improvement in the average standard of golf course maintenance.

#### HANDLING LABOR IS IMPORTANT

VERY little has been said about the selection and handling of laborers, but the subject is worthy of consideration regardless of the size of the course. Machinery and golf turf are both too expensive to trust to any kind of worker, and possibly the higher type of laborer could be used with real economy. A different situation exists in every club.

Greenkeepers, like army officers or athletic coaches, differ widely in the methods which they use and in the response which they can get from their men. The occasional story of the greenkeeper who carries a field glass to observe workers in distant parts of the course may be a bit humorous, but only one who has handled laborers knows how much time a worker can waste. Definite working rules are useful in some cases, and often there is need for them in such matters as lost and broken tools and in the cleaning of machinery after use.

It will be more of a problem than ever to maintain a contented, interested and loyal working force after a series of pay cuts during these times. Yet it can be done. Men will work whole-heartedly under adverse conditions if they feel that they are treated fairly and that their efforts are appreciated.

Much of the responsibility for the working force rests on the greenkeeper. Usually he must be a hard worker himself if the others are to have the right attitude, and yet who has not seen the foreman who is so engrossed in the work he is doing at the moment that the labor force is wondering what to do half of the time. At any rate, he must have the ability to plan the work or much time will be lost.

#### IMPROVED MACHINERY HAS HELPED

IMPROVED machinery made it possible for some clubs to keep up normal maintenance last summer. Others practically abandoned topdressing and fertilization throughout the season. While the grass held up remarkably well, a day of reckoning will probably come if such a practice is continued during the coming year.

Radical changes in such operations as topdressing enabled certain clubs to get along fairly well in spite of a reduced labor force. Some clubs are handling topdressing soil in sacks, which eliminates some

## Market Place and Buyers' Guide---

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Hyper-Humus Company  
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shoveling, and are using one of the newer types of topdressing distributors. These enable the work to be done in a fraction of the time that the work formerly took by hand and the application is much even. In this and other cases, the money spent by some clubs for equipment of this type is proving to be a far-sighted economy.

There are great opportunities for the extension of golf in the smaller communities of the country. The small town golf clubs are playing an important part in the social and recreational life of the community. Those responsible for keeping the smaller courses should aim high. Already many small town greenkeepers have demonstrated that the large clubs have no monopoly on good layout, natural beauty, or fine turf.

## The Perfection Sprinklers

THE Perfection Sprinkler Company, Plymouth, Michigan, are introducing a new product in their line which operates at a very low water pressure. This is due to the invention of a new spray nozzle which has revolutionized the rotary type of sprinkler by completely eliminating the several objectionable features which have been the cause of much trouble in the past.

The makers claim that in operation it intermittently interrupts in such a way as to deliver the correct amount of water at all distances from the center, the result being perfectly even distribution over the entire sprinkled area.

Groundskeepers should be interested in the right way to water greens. The truth is that water should be put upon the turf as fast as it will go down straight into the soil. If it goes down faster than the soil will absorb, the result is too many low spots and depleted high spots.

Slow, even watering is the right way and while it may take a little longer it is much more efficient and economical.

The company has a circular which explains their method, which may be had upon request.

## EMPLOYMENT DEPARTMENT

### GREENKEEPER WANTED

I have a position open for an all-around man, experienced in upkeep of an 18-hole sand green course. Must be A-1 with mowing equipment and machinery. Only one who takes interest in his work and sees that the job is done will be considered. Address all inquiries to Box 10, The National Greenkeeper and Turf Culture, Caxton Building, Cleveland, Ohio.

### POSITIONS WANTED

Experienced greenkeeper with splendid references desires position in the Chicago district. Understands thoroughly soil and climatic conditions. Good man for any club. Address inquiries to Box A, The National Greenkeeper and Turf Culture, Caxton Bldg., Cleveland, Ohio.

Nationally-known greenkeeper with many years' experience in the construction and maintenance of several well-known golf courses, such as Oakmont in Pittsburgh and Plum Hollow in Detroit. Has a son who will act as assistant and is an expert mechanic. This combination should appeal to any golf organization desiring efficient and economical management. The best of references will be furnished upon request. Address inquiries to Box B, The National Greenkeeper and Turf Culture, Caxton Bldg., Cleveland, Ohio.

Pro-greenkeeper or greenkeeper with best of recommendations and thorough experience in maintenance and construction. References furnished upon request. Address inquiries to Box C, The National Greenkeeper and Turf Culture, Caxton Bldg., Cleveland, Ohio.

Pro-greenkeeper with many years' experience, seeks position as professional, pro-greenkeeper or greenkeeper. Grandnephew of the late "Old" Tom Morris of St. Andrews, Scotland. References, John Ball, eight times British Amateur champion, and Jimmie Johnson, ex-American Amateur champion. Previous connections, Town and Country Club, Saint Paul; Midlothian C. C., Chicago; Louisville C. C.; Country Club of Harrisburg, Pa. Address Tom Morris, 1548 E. 64th Street, Chicago, Illinois.

## Better Greens

BETTER greens at lower maintenance cost is the slogan of the Jacobsen Mfg. Company, Racine, Wisconsin.

In a catalog recently issued they explain the economy which may be affected through the use of their mowing outfit and furnish a compilation of figures which appear to be quite conclusive.

This catalog is illustrated with views of estates and golf courses and explains quite accurately the character of their equipment.

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