

Stockdale Goes Soft

by Corey Eastwood, CGCS

I believe that with the gradual elimination of metal spikes on golf shoes, we will see a drastic increase in the quality of our golf greens.

Stockdale Country Club recently took the initiative to offer one set of the new revolutionary softspikes installed on one pair of each member's shoes at no charge. This practice is spreading like wildfire in the midwest with great success.

I was able to get this policy into effect by purchasing ten sets out of my budget and giving them to my green committee. One month later the committee voted unanimously to offer them to all members on a one time basis.

Some of the clubs that made this offer to their members are The Honors Course, Ooltewah, TN; Pine Valley Golf Club, Pine Valley, NJ; Muirfield Village Golf Club, Columbus, OH; and Double Eagle Golf Club, Columbus, OH. Many clubs have banned metal spikes, including Muirfield.

Let's all get together and start the process of slowly getting rid of metal spikes. There will be much skepticism among the golf professionals, but with persistence

most clubs will give this new idea a chance.

Benefits:

▲ There is **no more slippage** than one would get with standard metal spikes. Remember, everyone slips at one time or another.

▲ Softspikes cause **no damage** to golf greens, including scuffing and spikemarks.

▲ There should be no introducing of Poa Annua seeds into the greens.

▲ There is **no splitting or tearing** of the grass leaf tissue normally caused by metal spikes.

▲ **No damage** to the clubhouse and pro shop carpets extending the life of these many fold.

▲ The ability to wear these in any clubhouse location or even driving a car.

▲ **Eliminate scratches** on golf cart windshields and bodies.

▲ **Eliminate slipping** on cart paths and damage to parking lots and concrete areas.

Editor's Note: See related story this page - *December 31, 1999 - A 21st Century Fairy Tale.*

Tips from the USGA December 31, 1999 A 21st Century Fairy Tale

by Paul Vermeulen
USGA Agronomist

Today, December 31, 1999, I am reminded of some significant achievements of the last 100 years. The invention of the reel mower in the early 1900s, the discovery of 2,4-D by Fanny F. Davis in the mid-1940s, and, of course, the banning of steel spikes in the late 1990s.

While some achievements were readily embraced because their value was tangible to Superintendents across the country, the banning of steel spikes was an exception. It started as a small idea and slowly grabbed the American golfer's attention. In the early 1980s William "Bill" Benegyfield, Chairman of the USGA's Turfgrass Research Committee, contacted the office of Dr. Gibeault at the University of California, Riverside. Under Dr. Gibeault's guidance, an in-depth study of the effects of various golf shoes on putting greens was conducted.

The results of the golf shoe study were irrefutable. Golf shoes equipped with steel spikes literally cut the turf apart and compacted the soil. Furthermore, they "significantly" disrupt putting quality. Based on these results, how could the American golfer fail to immediately embrace spikeless golf shoes?

When the shoe study was conducted, it was done with shoes designed with spikeless soles. Two problems rose. First, the spikeless sole designs wore quickly, and were both difficult and expensive to replace.

Second, many golfers without a clear definition of a spikeless golf shoe were inadvertently sold athletic shoes for Astroturf sport fields. Unlike spikeless golf shoes that did little or no damage to putting greens, the Astroturf athletic shoes did unbelievable damage. As a consequence of this later problem, platoon discipline was evoked. All

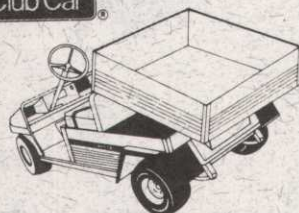
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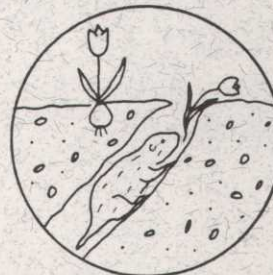
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USGA

Continued from page 3 shoes, except traditional steel spiked golf shoes, were banned on most golf courses.

From the nationwide ban of spikeless shoes in the early 1980s, the results of Dr. Gibeault's study were almost forgotten. In 1991, however, an ingenious inventor, who's name is not easily remembered, developed a soft, rubber spike. This spike could be used to retrofit all brands of steel spiked golf shoes. Unfortunately, it still took three years before this invention, known today as Soft-Spike, gave new life to the game of golf.

In 1994, the idea of banning steel spikes started grab-

bing hold. At the time, I remember being called an idealist for wearing Soft-Spikes during my travels and encouraging their use. I was told over and over by superintendents, golf professionals, and club managers, that until PGA Tour Players took off their steel spikes, the American golfer would never take note.

They were right. It was not until Murfield Village Golf Course in Ohio, home of Jack Nicklaus, instituted a steel spike ban that the tide started turning. The ban at Muirfield Village finally got the American golfers' attention. When golfers from Ohio returned to their winter retreats in the sunny southwest,

they brought with them "a new invention" for eliminating spike marks on greens. From Ohio and then the Southwest, the use of Soft-Spikes gradually spread across the entire United States.

Unbelievably, it was not until this year, when the United States Open returned to Pebble Beach Golf Links, that a major championship was hosted under a steel spike ban to preserve putting quality. It is hard to even imagine that major tournaments before 1999 could be won by a player whose putt was deflected into the hole by a spike mark left by a competitor.

(Please note that the USGA does not officially

endorse the sale of products by for-profit organizations. This agronomist, however, is an idealist who, as a golfer, is disgusted with greens that are torn apart by the time he gets to the course after work.)
Editor's note: See page 3 for related story *Stockdale Goes Soft*.

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New address and phone numbers for the publisher:
10928 Caminito
Alto, San Diego, CA 92131.
619/566-3400.
619/566-3555 (fax).

That Looks Easy

or Simple advice on how to make your home lawn look like a golf course.

by Bob Costa

One of the interesting aspects of being involved in the maintenance of a golf course is the questions people ask regarding our maintenance practices and how they relate to the care of their home lawns. What makes this business unique is that most everyone has, in some way, been involved in the maintenance and care of a lawn and, therefore, believes that they have developed a certain level of expertise. As a result, questions and comments regarding turf maintenance are at times a daily event.

Frequently I have people inquire about the establishment of a putting green in their back yard. A common question is "What

type of grass do you use on your green?" As if the variety we use is what causes the grass to grow so short. After I explain that it is not so much the type of grass, but the height at which it is mowed, I follow with comments like, "you'll need a mower that will cut at less than 1/4", a new one could cost as much as \$5,000, and the green should be mowed a minimum of five times a week." By now I can sense a general uneasiness, a slight shuffling of the feet, but I don't stop there. I conclude that in order to mimic putting qualities the green will have to be occasionally verticut, lightly syringed, and may require an application

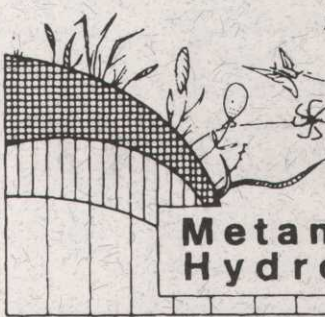
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