

Spring Work on the Golf Course

After the long and severe winter we have passed through and with spring upon us the greenkeeper has now to bestir himself to get his course and putting greens in shape for the coming golfing season which will soon open. The golfer who has not had the time to go south will without doubt take the chance at the first possible moment to pay a visit to his home links, and very naturally be anxious to put in a round after his long winter's rest. As I said in my previous article he may possibly have put in his appearance during a break in the arctic weather and played around just to open up his shoulders and have some exercise, but he did not look for or expect anything in the way of good golfing conditions.

He was merely out for the fun of the thing, that was all, and took everything he found had been done for him in a philosophical and good natured manner.

He knew the greenkeeper had done his best for him under the trying circumstances, and for once in a way he had no reason to kick or complain at the efforts of this very much abused, at times, important person. With the first appearance of good weather he will most naturally make his way to his favorite course and will expect to find it in good playing condition. Personally I think the first few weeks in spring is the hardest part of the greenkeeper's work. He has to make good

CARE OF THE GREEN

all the damage caused by the ravages of the winter weather and this is no light job should there have been severe frosts.

If, as it happens, especially on courses situated on high lands, inland and away from the sea, a covering of snow has fallen before the severe frosts set in this will help out to a very large extent to protect the ground surface. The snow will help to keep the frost from getting at the grass plants and also at the same time give them a certain amount of warmth. If, however, the frost comes while the ground is clear of snow, and with any severity, a very different state of affairs will happen, and the greenkeeper will anxiously await the results. Snow does good to the course in more ways than one, it keeps the ground warm to a certain extent and should it lay to any great depth, it keeps the player away, and of course gives the course a much needed rest. After the severe frost of the winter months it will be found that when the frost has left the ground the surface will be all heaved up into small hills and hollows so much so that a putting green which in the beginning of the winter had a surface as smooth and even as a billiard table, will resemble more of an Alpinization scheme, on a small scale, which it had been deemed necessary to carry out for the proper development of the course in general.

This last winter has been an exceptionally severe one with penetrating frosts. I am afraid that a very great deal of winter kill will have taken place on many

CARE OF THE GREEN

courses. I have seen it already on some courses I have visited lately. Where winter kill has taken place it behooves the greenkeeper to put this straight right away. The bent grasses are more sensitive to this evil than the fescues and where there is any great amount of fescue in the turf affected I would suggest the following course of treatment:

First. I would suggest that the area affected be spiked very thoroughly by hand. The greenkeeper can easily make one of those most necessary tools himself by using a good stout piece of board a foot square and filled with stout nails or spikes. This tool used in the same way as a turf tamper or beater will fill the affected area with numerous small holes and at the same time will loosen up the surface. When thoroughly spiked apply a mixture of grass seed suitable to the other part of the putting green. Brush the seed lightly so that it may find its way into the small holes made by spiking, then cover over with a top dressing of good rich compost which should be well rubbed in. Let me say that I suggest this treatment only where there is any sign of life left at all in the turf, but where the turf has entirely died out more drastic measures may have to be taken, and the greenkeeper may have to entirely returf the affected part from his nursery.

Let me here just point out one more point in regard to winter kill and it is this. Winter kill takes place for the most part on the lowest parts of the green, that

CARE OF THE GREEN

is to say where water lies and freezes hard. A putting green properly constructed can have all the necessary hollows to make it interesting, but so built that no water will gather in such quantity that it will freeze to any great thickness and remain for any great length of time.

So much for this winter kill. I could say more but will again take this up at a later time as I hold some strong ideas of my own about it and also as to its cause and how it takes place. As I have before said, the frost will have opened up the surface of the green, but not where winter kill has taken place so much, hence my idea of spiking up this part. It will be seen that the frost having gone out of the ground, it has left behind numerous small holes or receptacles for seed.

Now I would suggest that where the putting green is thin and reseeding is imperative to secure a thick carpet of turf no better chance could come the green-keeper's way than to take advantage of what nature has placed in his way, namely to first sow his seed (before rolling). The seed will find its way into all the small receptacles if, after sowing, he brushes it in lightly, afterwards applying a top dressing of good compost, well rubbed in, and afterwards given a light roll. I say roll, as care should be taken to keep the surface as loose as possible, but of course smooth so that the newly-sown grass seeds may germinate freely and find their way through.

By carrying out this procedure it will be found to

CARE OF THE GREEN

work well and a smooth and even surface of turf will assuredly be procured.

In the case of the old turf, however, more drastic and firm measures should be applied. For old turf that has been thrown up by the frost into an uneven surface I suggest the following treatment. As soon as the frost is *all* out of the ground and the soil has dried out a bit, a thorough good roll with a heavy iron roller will probably put the surface back to its original smoothness, but I would particularly put out a word of warning to the greenkeeper to take every care not to overdo this part of the work as by overrolling he may just possibly go to the other extreme, and one worse in my opinion than any other, namely, forming the surface into a cement-like condition through which it would be utterly impossible for the young spring shoots to make their way.

I find that where the surface has been very badly heaved up into hills and hollows, a good plan is to fork the hollows up and then roll. By doing this less rolling is necessary and the surface is kept more loose, but true however. So much for rolling, etc. Of course after the rigors of the winter it has passed through, and to push it along as fast as possible, so that it may be in condition for play, the greenkeeper has to resort to some sort of stimulant, or fertilizer, to help it along. I myself find an excellent stimulant, and one that fits in just here.

Malt sprouts. A top dressing of malt sprouts will

CARE OF THE GREEN

help on the grass most excellently and at the same time keep it hardy and able to withstand wear and tear of hard play. So much for the putting greens, the tees should be treated in a similar manner.

On the fairways the frost will most assuredly have worked the surface up into a much more loose condition than the putting greens, as the turf will not be so thick, or close, and therefore it will have got a much better hold of the ground. I would suggest a similar treatment of the fairways practically as I gave for the putting greens, namely, take full advantage of the fine open surface nature has provided as a seed bed, sow your seed, top dress if necessary, and roll very lightly. I believe it to have been the case, although personally I have never seen it carried out, but have seen the after effects, a steam roller has been called into use for the purpose of rolling the fairways in spring. I agree that a fine smooth surface must assuredly be got by its use, but at what a cost! What was in former years beautiful turf, clean, though perhaps maybe a trifle slow, transformed into a little less than a mud heap, where all sorts of coarse grasses and weeds had taken the place of where once the finer grasses held supreme sway. Let me once again issue a word of warning against overrolling and more so in spring time when the young plants are most tender and so easily killed.

If rolling has to be done, as I admit it has to be, use a light roller, and only put the surface back to its origi-

CARE OF THE GREEN

nal level, but on no account try to push it beyond that as disaster will assuredly follow if this system is pursued and the club, or the greenkeeper responsible for so doing will soon find themselves in a hole.

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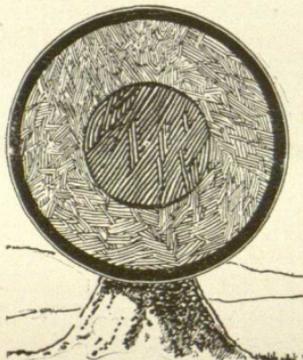
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