

Monday, September 21 found our members participating in a joint meeting with the Club Managers Association at the beautiful Midlothian Country Club for golf and dinner. Ed Duehr, Host Superintendent had his headaches that day because of the heavy rain the day before. One of his fairways was completely under water. Despite this fact he had the rest of the course in great shape. I have never seen so much bent in watered fairways in the Chicago area. The Superintendents won all the golf prizes.

OCTOBER MEETING

Our annual Golf Tournament will be played at our next Monthly meeting. The Host Club will be Briarwood Country Club in Deerfield, Illinois. The meeting date has been set for Tuesday, October 13, 1964. Sharpen up your game and play the challenging golf course that Paul Voykin, the host Superintendent, has groomed so well all summer.



Left to right — Dr. Jack Butler, Dr. Mike Britton James Holmes, Dr. William H. Daniel, Roy Nelson, Warren Bidwell.

SPECIAL MEETING

LA SALLE HOTEL, August 21, 1964

At our last monthly meeting held at Olympia Fields Country Club on August 3, 1964 it was suggested that our Association attempt to hire some individual to come into our area and investigate our problem. This person in turn would make a report on his findings and perhaps give us some good clues as to what really happened.

This was approved by the majority present. On Friday, August 7 President Warren Bidwell called a Board meeting to discuss problems involved in securing such an individual. The outcome of the meeting resulted in a compromise. After realizing that one individual would find this too big a task it was decided that we call on the Chicago District Golf Association to help us. After discussing the various ramifications of this problem it was decided to ask Dr. William H. Daniel of Purdue and Dr. Mike Britton and Dr. Jack Butler of the University of Illinois to participate in a panel discussion along with two of our Superintendents from Chicago. Next we needed a Moderator and only one man fit this bill. Jim Holmes, our Midwest Agronomist representing the United States Golf Association, was the man. The meeting date was set for 3:30 P.M. Friday, August 21, 1964 at the La Salle Hotel in Chicago, Illinois.

The meeting was opened by Mr. Charles Eckstein, one of the biggest backers of the Golf Course Superintendent, representing the Greens Committee of the Chicago District Golf Association. After remarking on the reasons for the meeting, he turned the program over to the affable Jim Holmes. Jim pointed out that we were assembled to discuss two things: What happened to our fairway turf? and, What are we going to do about it?

It must be pointed out at this time that there were over 200 attending. Several states were represented Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, Indiana and Michigan. The group was made up of Superintendents and their Chairmen as well as many Club Officials and interested Commercial People.

The panel consisted of:

- Dr. William H. Daniel, Purdue University
- Dr. Jack Butler, University of Illinois
- Dr. Mike Britton, University of Illinois
- Mr. Roy Nelson, Superintendent of Ravisloe Country Club
- Mr. Warren Bidwell, Superintendent, Olympia Fields Country Club

Dr. Butler's opening remarks follow:

No one thing was to blame — Each environment is different. Soil conditions, drainage, management, variety of grasses and amounts of rainfall all entered into the picture. Conditions are different everywhere. The man who lives with the problem is the man to pinpoint the reasons for the problems.

Dr. Britton's opening remarks:

We have experienced wet, hot, and humid conditions this past month. These factors are perfect for disease. Mike showed several slides at this point illustrating what the disease looked like and the damage that it had done. Moisture is the key to our problem, whether in the soil or in the air. Last severe attack was in 1955. This disease may hit every year or it may skip many years. Annual Bluegrass seemed to have been more susceptible to Pythium damage than either Bent or Common Kentucky Bluegrass. There are no adequate chemical controls at present for the prevention or cure of Pythium.

Dr. Daniel's opening remarks:

We have had other years when this pest was prevalent. Some worse and some not quite as bad. If there is a breeze or if the humidity is below 40% by 10:00 A.M. there is little damage from disease. If we have high temperatures, high humidity and no wind for several days we have trouble with disease. It seems to incubate at night.

Mr. Warren Bidwell's opening remarks:

Are we not as a group of Superintendents trying to strive too hard for perfection? Aren't we trying to soup up the grass too much? Aren't we as a group of Superintendents too color conscious? Don't we invite many of our own troubles? The competition with the club across the street is perhaps too keen. We use more fertilizer each year. Some old timers practice minimum feeding programs to help them through time of stress. They sacrifice looks for ease of maintenance during rough times.

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Isn't it too bad that we had trouble with Pythium all these years and with all the money expended and with all the research that is going on and still don't have a control of Pythium?

Britton answers this Question —

The only time this disease can be worked on in the field, is when it is present. This time is usually too short to derive any definite conclusions. The next best thing we can do is to work with Controlled Climate Chambers in the Laboratory. We have such a chamber at the University of Illinois. Dr. Beard was just given one at Michigan State University by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. He will be doing some work in the future. Even if we find controls in the Controlled Climate Chamber it doesn't mean that these controls will work in the field. An example is the recommended dosage of Zineb which failed in the field this year for Rust control. It worked beautifully in the lab. We presently have some promising materials but we need to know more on rates of application in the field.

Mr. Roy Nelson's opening remarks:

There are basically four prerequisites for diseases to thrive. First you need a Pathogen (disease), next you need a host (grass.) There also has to be the proper environment (weather) and last we need a carrier (wind, water, insects, golfer, etc.) If we can eliminate any one of these we can control the disease. We realize that the weather cannot be controlled. We have been spending most of our effort in eliminating the disease with chemicals. Perhaps we should concentrate our efforts in the direction of one of the other prerequisites. Maybe we can control the carrier — water or dew removal — mechanically. Removing dew in the morning seems to help. Some of our fungicides seem to weaken the grass therefore opening up avenues for the disease to enter and do its damage. We may be defeating our purpose with the use of chemicals.

Jim Holmes —

We all realize that we have a problem, so what do we do about it?

Dr. Daniel —

We in the Midwest lose more turf to wilt each year than all the diseases put together, this is primarily due to the short root system of the **Poa annua**. Very

little bent is lost to wilt. The diseases do little damage to Bent.

Holmes —

Do we go back to Bluegrasses?

Bob Williams, Supt. of Bob-O-Link C. C.

As I see it there are two alternatives that Club Officials have when deciding what type of fairways they should have especially if they are in the process of building a new course. Most of our clubs do not have a choice because the decision was made by nature many years ago. A new Club can decide between Bluegrass or Bent-Poa fairways.

Maybe we should reevaluate our present standards of fairway maintenance. Our present standards have been set by the so called better golfer. Are our standards what the average golfer really wants? Our Club Officials should be made to understand that under the present standards (that is with the present materials and equipment) we may expect to lose turf periodically when such conditions arise as we experienced this year. Granted, Poa-Bent fairways are far superior to present day Bluegrass when the Poa and Bent is at its peak. But, during times of stress they are inferior.

In the very near future through plant breeding and plant selection we should arrive at a Bluegrass that would give us superior turf for modern golfing conditions. Not like the Bluegrasses of old — with all the new chemicals and equipment on the market today our job would be much easier. The turf would be more serviceable for the majority of the season when compared to what we have today.

There is hardly a season that goes by without losing some fairway turf for a period of several weeks. When we consider that maintenance of Poa-Bent fairways has become nightmarish for the Superintendent — they require around the clock attention seven days a week. Is it worth it? It certainly is expensive for the Club. Modern usage of the golf cars has also added to our headaches as well as the increase in play and the constant beating of our equipment over the fairways hundreds of times per season. Can we stay with it when we know that Bluegrass would outperform the Poa-Bent fairways?

Bidwell —

Ninety percent of our trouble is caused by the **Poa**. I am doing everything in my power to increase my stand of Bent in our fairways at Olympia Fields. We are seeding, aerifying, slitting — and with more chemicals, fertilizers and with a better water program we seem to be gaining on the Poa. Our bent population has increased 30 or 40 percent during the last five years.

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Dr. Daniel —

Are you sure you want to do without **Poa annua**?

Bidwell —

Yes. If I could wave a magic wand over my turf and say, "Poa be gone!" I would do it.

Dr. Daniel —

If you want to eliminate **Poa annua** you have committed yourself to growing perfect turf whether Bluegrass or Bent. Any short comings must be compensated for. We have new management tools today such as thatch removal equipment, new herbicides and fungicides. We can control all annual weeds in Bluegrass. (**Poa annua** is not an annual.) Sometime in the very near future we may be able to raise weed free and disease free Bluegrass. If we can, then we can mow it much shorter and give the golfer what he wants with much less expense. It will take a great deal of tedium, however. The Bluegrasses we have at present are not the answer.

Question from the floor: What type of Bent should we try to establish in our fairways?

Oscar Borgmeier, Geo. A. Davis Company —

At present we sell almost twice as much Seaside Bent as compared to Highland or Astoria. The reason being that Seaside Bent seems to stool out quicker. It is more of a Creeping Bent. The price of Penn Cross is coming down fast. It is much cheaper than any other time in the past. Seed a mixture of the three. I have noticed more grass being killed during the summer months by standing water than by any other reason. I see so much poor drainage both surface and subsurface. Why does grass under water, die in the summer and not in the Spring or Fall?

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Dr. Butler —

The need for high amounts of oxygen needed by the plants during the heat of the summer cannot be supplied by the roots when under water. This causes the plant to wilt. Getting back to this other thing of controlling Poa; My biggest fear is that we might find a good killer of Poa. Some of us would be in real trouble if we killed all our Poa.

Nelson —

I agree with Oscar on this drainage problem and the loss of grass. We at Ravisloe have been improving our drainage problem in several ways. First we have been cleaning out clogged tiles and where necessary adding surface drains which we connect to the underground tile. Another way is in draining individual wet spots with a slit-trench back-filled with pea gravel all the way to the surface. Do not cover gravel with soil. It will seal off the gravel and you will defeat the purpose of the trench. Run these trenches through the wet area out into the dry soil surrounding it for 30 or 40 feet. The grass will soon grow over this small trench and hide the gravel but you will continue to drain your wet spot.

Another way in which we have improved our drainage is to use the Aero-Blade machine to cut through the thatch and allow water and air into the compacted soil. This encourages root growth.

Dr. Britton —

Many diseases in the area of the crown and root will cause symptoms of wilt.

Holmes —

The better golfer tends to influence other members in the condition of the turf.

Dr. Daniel —

If you decide to go to Bluegrass fairways you have six choices. Merion, Delta, Park, Newport, Common, and Windsor. Do not use any one of these straight. Always plant a mixture, such as Merion mixed with Newport, or Delta mixed with Park and Common. This will allow one grass to cover up the weakness of the others.

Charles Wilson, Milwaukee Sewerage Commission—

Please do not lessen your standards of fairways maintenance. There is a Club in Toronto, Canada, where they converted several acres of Poa-Bent fairway turf to pure Merion several years ago. The Merion is beautiful but they are now in the process of going back to the Poa-Bent fairways at the request of the membership. We are not quite ready to make this change. The golfer hasn't been educated yet.

Dr. Daniel —

Why can't we control the **Poa annua**? We can! Are you ready to do it?

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Dr. Butler —

Some work has been done to improve the strain of *Poa annua* so we might develop a new strain that will withstand some of the torture that it must go through to survive. Most of these projects have been abandoned. There apparently is no such thing as a good *Poa annua*.

Dr. Britton —

You can't try to kill it and try to keep it too. You have to do one or the other.

Nelson —

If you can't lick it, Join it. *Poa* can be saved in greens but it is too expensive on an acreage basis to try and save it in the fairways.

Dr. Britton —

Dithane M45 deserves another look. It may have some promises.

Charles Wilson —

The product DEXON seemed to give good control down south under certain conditions. This seemed to vary in one case with the time of application. It may be light sensitive. Some people have used it on Bent Greens at the rate of 2 ozs. per 1000 sq. ft.

Holmes —

We all know that we can't go in and plow our fairways but we can do the next best thing, we can use an Aero-tiller. This machine or similar ones have proven time and again that they are helping in the control of thatch and aeration of the soil.

This whole problem may have been a blessing in disguise. Get in there now and seed some Bent into your fairways and get the jump on the *Poa*. This is the easiest way to do it, when the *Poa* is weak or dead.

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Dr. Daniel —

If you are interested in slowing up the spread of *Poa annua* you might try this. Make a fall application of Maleic Hydrazide — just enough to slow down seedhead formation of *Poa annua*. (A little less than one pint per acre.) This should be applied in late afternoon with a small amount of a wetting agent. This should be repeated then in the Spring after the first or second mowing as soon as the first seedhead is noticed. It will only reduce growth of those plants sprayed. I am not saying that you should try it. For heaven sakes if you do, don't do it to the whole golf course. Just try it on a small area. This stuff is dangerous. Too much will stop terminal growth of Bent and Bluegrass.

Nelson and Dr. Britton —

Hose dragging in the early morning certainly seems to slow up diseases. Anything that can be done to knock off the water from the leaf surface will help. The longer grass stays wet the better your chances are of getting a disease.

Wetting agents may be another answer in preventing dew in the first place. Some people report outstanding results with wetting agents. One person in the audience reported using a wetting agent at the rate of one oz. per 1000 sq. ft. every three days.

We of the Midwest Association of Golf Course Superintendents certainly are thankful for the efforts of The Chicago District Golf Association in helping to assemble this panel. Thanks also to the U.S.G.A. and Jim Holmes for helping to conduct the meeting. The panel was outstanding and we can all breathe a little easier now.

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