

Golf Course Superintendents Associations' of America Public Relations' Firm at Work

An uncontrollable grass killing fungus, Pythium Blight, is wreaking havoc with American golf courses.

Golfers should not panic, however. No courses have been closed as a result of the disease which in many areas of the country is also known as "cottony blight." But some fairways, greens, and green collars — aprons or fringes — are marked off as ground under repair. When a ball comes to rest in these areas, a free lift is granted under local rule.

These facts were brought to light in a just completed, spot-check survey by the Golf Course superintendents Association of America (GCSAA), among research scientists, agronomists, golf course superintendents and other golf agencies around the country.

A combination of unusually long periods of warm, humid weather and excessive rain was the chief source of trouble, the survey showed. Afterwards, a whitish cobwebby substance forms in and on top of the turf, in the early morning. As the sun rises and the infected turf becomes water soaked, the fungus darkens giving off a greasy appearance.

Later in the day, the "web" disappears and the infected leaves take on a tan to red color. In early infection periods these spots often run in streaks, following the surface drainage of the links.

According to the survey, the disease is most aggressive in moisture saturated atmospheres, when temperatures range between 85 and 95 degrees. It has no known cause nor cure, nor are there any preventive measures for curbing it. This leaves the golf superintendent completely helpless and at the mercy of the weather.

Chemical programs may contain the bug briefly, but the surest "stopper" is cool, dry weather.

The most seriously damaged courses, the survey noted, are in the following critical areas.

Metropolitan St. Louis and the remainder of the crabgrass belt ranging from Kansas City to Washington, D. C.; the Columbus, Dayton, Cincinnati areas of Ohio, and the Carolinas; Central Illinois and Central Indiana.

Non-critical but serious, these areas include, the New England States; northern Ohio bordering on Lake Erie; Palm Springs and San Francisco Bay areas of California; Central and Northern New Jersey, plus Metropolitan New York and Northern Virginia.

Other less serious cases have been reported in Michigan, Texas, Northern Illinois, Northern Indiana, Wisconsin and Florida.

GCSAA cautioned club officials and greens chairmen of courses not in Pythium areas.

They should not get that smug feeling, GCSAA warned. Pythium could strike their courses at any moment. Remember, August is one of the hottest months of the year and it isn't over yet. In the meantime, swing away.

Based in Des Plaines, Illinois, GCSAA is composed of nearly 3,000 golf course superintendents who are in charge of keeping the nation's courses in top shape for the millions of golfers who enjoy the game.

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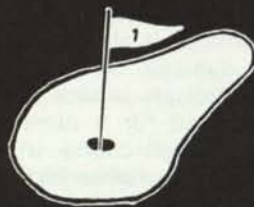
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