

THE BULL SHEET, official publication of THE MIDWEST ASSOCIATION OF GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENTS.

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The President's Message

The battle over DDT has drawn world wide attention. After 27 years of testimony for and against it in Wisconsin recently, the two sides were given 30 days to gain additional information before a decision is rendered. DDT is considered a "hard" pesticide — a pesticide that persists for long periods without decomposing into less harmful derivatives. One state has already banned it, and others are contemplating of doing so. Sweden has banned it for 2 years while further studies are made on DDT's effects.

Several thousand pages of testimony have already been heard on DDT, with no agreement in sight by its enemies or supporters. The argument that DDT has been found in mother's milk, I think will create a terrific impact against the pesticide. As I'm sure that any expectant mother does not want to expose her baby to anything harmful. So whether all the facts have been evaluated or not, these people will be for banning it because of the possible harm. And I am sure they will have plenty of supporters — at least the fathers.

I feel that most of these arguments are blown out of proportion — sometimes by both parties. This isn't the first time that pesticides and other chemicals have come under criticism. I am sure we all recall the book *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson. Maybe some of you read it. She would have you believe that any user of pesticide would eventually help kill off all civilization. I do agree that we have to use caution and be sensible about its application and rates. And the manufacturer is the first to warn you and prescribe to you how to use it. Every grass mowing equipment manufacturer cautions you on the safety of operating their equipment. And every year fingers, toes, and hands are cut off or maimed. Do we discontinue to cut our grass with machinery and go back to the scythe, or maybe goats? Certainly not.

I personally haven't used DDT too much. Having been blessed with very few elm trees, the little DDT I have used has been for mosquitoes. And the past few years I have used Malathion for these little stingers. I recall a number of years ago I sprayed chlordane on my fairways for cutworms. The following day several scores of birds were found dead



Golf Chairman Joe Canale, Low Gross runner-up Ken Goodman and the MAGCS Low Gross Champion for 1969, Peter Voykin, Superintendent at Idlewild C. C.



Senior Championship runner-up Marcus List, Superintendent at Old Wayne C. C. and the Senior Champion for 1969 Emil Mashie, Superintendent at Onwentsia C. C.

or dying. I theorized that the birds had eaten the dead worms and in turn also died. The members (especially the women) had many questions and comments. But we felt the grass was more important to the golf course than the birds, and we have continued to spray with the same type of material. And except for this one incident, not a single dead bird has been found. The question in my mind since then has been, what actually did kill these birds.

Although I am not an authority on pesticide and chemicals, I feel that DDT has done a lot of good and does not deserve the "black eye" it now has received. I do feel it has been used indiscreetly in some cases, just like some of us over eat and drink. So it remains to be seen what the eventual outcome will be. In the meantime we do have available to us other pesticides that we can use with excellent results. And it is my feeling that it will not jeopardize our turf maintenance program if it should be banned.

Ed Wollenberg, President

KEEPING UP TO PAR

More Demanding

Specialists Struggle to Grow Grass Despite
Tournament Crowds, Spikes, Divots

Mollifying the Club Members

By John A. Prestbo

Staff Reporter of *The Wall Street Journal*

CHICAGO—If your once lush green lawn is now turning brown (and your wife is nagging you to do something about it), take some tips from an expert grass grower:

Your problem might be one of 40 common turf diseases which Oscar L. Miles of south suburban Chicago is always looking closely for. This year he plans to spray his grass with mixtures of fungicides totaling 4,925 pounds of expensive chemicals.

Or maybe your browning lawn needs more water. Each summer Mr. Miles irrigates his grass with about 31 million gallons, pumped through a 10-mile network of pipes and sprinklers.

Of course, he tends a bit more turf than the average weekend gardener. Mr. Miles is superintendent of two 18-hole courses at Olympia Fields Country Club.

He's one of the nation's estimated 5,500 golf course superintendents, whose jobs are part agronomy and part aggravation. Their bosses are dedicated golfers whose own lawns at home could be a tangle of dandelions but who rage if their bobbled putts can be even remotely blamed on a stray blade of grass.

A Chance Remark

Each year many superintendents have their reputations put on the line when their clubs host major tournaments. Then, a chance comment to a sports reporter by a disgruntled pro ("I would've broke par if the greens weren't in such lousy condition") could give their handiwork a nationwide bad press overnight.

Golf course superintendents "are expected to raise laboratory-quality grass under battlefield conditions", says Ben J. Chlevin, executive director of the superintendents' national association. This year some 11 million American golfers, nearly 50% more than five years ago, will tromp around 9,615 golf courses (many

smaller, publicly owned courses can't afford a full-time superintendent, which explains why there are fewer superintendents than courses). The golfers will chew up the turf with their spiked shoes and dig it up with their clubs.

To cope with the punishment their grass must take, superintendents have become a highly specialized, professional group. Twenty years ago, when golf wasn't the national craze it is now, superintendents were called greenskeepers, were paid meagerly and had no formal training. Some of them came from farms, while others drifted into the work because they had a green thumb.

A Costly Crop

Today, superintendents are entrusted with growing what's probably the nation's most expensive crop. Many plush country clubs sprawl over land worth \$50,000 or more an acre, and in metropolitan areas such as Chicago their superintendents spend upwards of \$100,000 a year to maintain each 18-hole course.

With this kind of money at stake, golf clubs aren't hiring amateurs anymore. Many of the younger superintendents have bachelor's degrees in agronomy or some related subject, and a few hold master's degrees. Many are graduates of special turf management courses offered by a dozen universities around the country.

The new breed of superintendent works with soil tests and chemical analyses instead of intuition. Some are even feeding soil conditions into computers to help determine how much water and what kind of fertilizer to apply and when. Top superintendents are paid up to \$23,000 a year and some are provided free housing on the course.

Like many of his colleagues, Oscar Miles of Olympia Fields is a golf enthusiast. When he was a teenager he considered making golf his career but then chose superintendency because he saw "more potential for advancement" in grass-growing than on the pro circuit. Now an energetic 30-year old with a sand-colored mutache, Mr. Miles plays his two courses at least twice a week "So I can see how the course is from the golfer's point of view." (He has a seven handicap.)

Thick Grass

Under his watchful eye, his 36-man summer crew (15 are year-round men) mow the club's eight miles of fairway every other day at five-eighths of an inch. He keeps fairway grass growing thick so that golf balls will perch on top of the blades instead of sinking down. That's important because golfers lose a degree of control of their hits if grass or clover comes between the swinging club face and the ball.

Mr. Miles' greens are trimmed early each morning at three-sixteenths of an inch, a much shorter pile than in many living room carpets. The tees are also clipped daily, at three-eighths of an inch, and the roughs are mowed weekly at three inches.

The worst enemy of Mr. Miles' 380 acres of manicured greenery is people's feet. He can control the damage caused by members playing 45,000 rounds a year, but tournaments are major headaches. Last August 70,000 spectators flocked on Olympia Fields' north course for the annual four-day Western Open, and Mr. Miles knew the milling throng, many with spiked shoes on, would trample his grass to death.

Replanting it all after the tournament would take time and interrupt members' play. But Mr. Miles came