

Green Slick as Glass?

LOF Puts Old Expression to the Test

Every golfer knows what it means when a green is "slicker than glass." It means trouble. But Golf Digest, with a little help from Libbey-Owens-Ford Co., tried to put some precision in the golfer's cliché by comparing glass and grass mathematically.

For its June issue, the magazine commissioned a series of tests on a variety of surfaces: marble ("faster than a marble staircase"), pavement ("like putting on concrete"), a billiard table ("smoother than a billiard table"), and a tub of molasses ("slower than molasses in January").

To get comparative speed figures for its tongue-in-cheek test, Golf Digest used a Stimpmeter — a device designed to release a rolling golf ball so that the distance it rolls indicate the "speed" of the surface. Most golf greens allow the ball to roll 6 to 8 feet, the magazine said, but some very fast greens might register up to 14 on the Stimpmeter.

So, how fast is glass versus grass?

To find out, Golf Digest contacted LOF's corporate headquarters in Toledo, and after some consultation, the company's management decided there was no harm in the project and allowed the test to take place on a huge sheet of glass at its Rossford plant.

An LOF employee, Leonard Klaege, performed the Stimpmeter test, and the magazine recorded the result:

"Reading: 468.7 Summary: For this report, we rely on our correspondent, Mel Barger, who supervised the test... 'The ball

traveled fast out of the Stimpmeter and did not appear to be slowing down much by the time it reached the edge of our 26 foot, 8 inch piece of glass. According to our stopwatches, the ball traveled this distance in 5,001 seconds, so you can relate that to the speed of other surfaces. We also noticed that golf balls don't roll smoothly on glass. The dimples on the balls apparently make them sort of bounce along."

The magazine concluded that molasses in January is indeed slow. The ball traveled only two inches. "What's appealing about the surface, however, is it putts so true."

The Magazine's "scientific" findings were clouded somewhat by circumstances.

The 68.5 reading for a marble staircase, for example, was expurgated to keep the ball from rolling through a 300-year-old Chinese vase.

The billiard table only rated 5.9 because "the Stimpmeter scored a Titleist 3 in the corner pocket."

And the sloping of the New Jersey Turnpike could have accounted for its high reading of 17,462. "Following in a car we observed the ball accelerate near the Newark, N.J. exit on the turnpike, then roll steadily to a point opposite several Elizabeth, N.J. chemical plants, where it passed through a patch of lavender mist and disintegrated."

The results of the tests, the magazine said, "suggest that the poetry of putting and the science of speedometry cannot be mixed."

Credit — Divots October 1985



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