

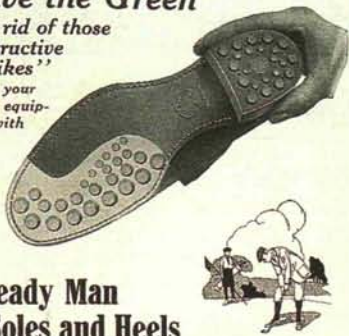
The Next Step in Golf

Paul Vermeulen
USGA Green Section

As an apology for having devastated courses from July 1995 through May 1996, Mother Nature has been almost kind during the past several months. Given such favorable weather conditions, superintendents have been able to produce excellent putting conditions that, if not for the cumulative effects of steel-spiked shoes worn by many golfers, would last from sunup to sundown. As any golfer who has played in the afternoon realizes, it is only the first eight to ten groups of the day that enjoy the flawless conditions left by the maintenance staff.

While some are content with the negative effects of steel-spiked shoes, literally hundreds of courses, both public and private, have proven that the use of spikeless

Save the Green
Get rid of those destructive "spikes"
Have your shoes equipped with



Steady Man Soles and Heels

of sturdy rubber—the raised rubber studs give you the firm stance you need. No occasion to change shoes for luncheon or between games. Steady Man Soles and Heels do not disfigure rugs or floor, nor tear the turf or green.

Ask your club "Pro" about them, and at high grade stores. Or, send us the outline of your shoe on a piece of paper, and your check for \$1.50, and we'll supply you direct.

THE STEDMAN PRODUCTS COMPANY
South Braintree, Massachusetts

shoes eliminates the damage caused by golfers as they walk across the putting surface. These findings are supported by several research projects funded by the United States Golf Association which unequivocally demonstrate that the use of spikeless spikes, which do not penetrate the turf canopy, improves putting quality by eliminating spike marks and improves turf quality by eliminating the mechanical destruction of the turf canopy. For those that have not yet seen spikeless spikes, they are hard plastic replacements for steel spikes that are designed such that they: (1) eliminate spike marks, (2) improve turf performance by reducing the physical

abrasion of pedestrian traffic, and (3) improve golf shoe comfort.

Despite the hundreds of courses which have proven that the use of spikeless spikes by each and every player improves putting quality and reduces turf wear, there are still many golfers that believe the responsibility of excellent putting conditions rests solely on the shoulders of the superintendent. These individuals assume that a regular regimen of vertical mowing, topdressing, judicious irrigation, close mowing, etc., can somehow create a smooth, firm putting surface that is resistant to the negative effects of steel spikes. Furthermore, some even believe that steel spikes actually improve the health of the turf by aerating the soil! If this were all true, why do golfers demand that the location of the hole be changed on a daily basis so that they can putt on fresh turf?

Having had the opportunity to visit with superintendents that have encouraged their governing course officials to adopt a steel spike ban, I am confident that the responsibility for the condition of the greens in the late afternoon rests on both the shoulders of the superintendent and the golfers. With the cooperation of each and every golfer, the condition of the

(continued on page 24)



The Next Step in Golf
(continued from page 6)

greens at courses, such as Wynstone Golf Club, has reached an unprecedented level of turf quality. Specifically, the greens are as good for the last group of the day as they have always been for the group with the privilege to follow the maintenance staff in the early morning.

In regard to the age old topic of *Poa annua* encroachment, while it has not been shown in scientific studies that steel-spiked shoes cause its invasion, the fact that it is most prevalent in the vicinity of the common hole locations indicates that there is, at least, some correlation. The link between the hole locations and *Poa annua* invasion is likely due to the physical destruction of the turf canopy by steel-spiked shoes that creates the opportunity for seeds already lying in the soil to

germinate and establish. If so, spikeless shoes are likely the best means of slowing the invasion of *Poa annua* into new areas of each green. For the *Poa annua* that is already firmly established, it is doubtful that spikeless shoes are the answer to its eradication.

While traction is not a significant issue for most golfers, a small minority may have difficulty walking on sloped areas and, therefore, may wish to continue wearing traditional spikes. These individuals should not, however,

miss the opportunity to continue testing the new spikeless spikes that are appearing in pro shops on an almost monthly basis. In time, they will, hopefully, find a spikeless spike with which they are comfortable and that balances the scale between putting quality, turf quality, and traction. As the twenty-first century approaches, it is important to note that a course cannot have the best greens in town without golfers taking their next step in shoes that do not damage the putting surface. ■

TURFTALK

630/898-6168



Growers of Quality Sod

SERVICE!

LOCAL GROWING FOR
EASY PICKUP OR QUICK DELIVERY.
DELIVERY ON TIME, EVERYTIME.

QUALITY!

FEATURING
ELITE KENTUCKY BLUEGRASS,
BENTGRASS SOD, AND
TURF-TYPE FESCUE

- LOWER MAINTENANCE
- MORE DROUGHT & SHADE TOLERANT
- BETTER WEAR RESISTANCE

PRICE!

CALL FOR A QUOTE



MAIN STREET
11 MILES WEST
OF BATAVIA, IL

630-557-2900

PRECISION BLENDED TOP DRESSING

Custom blended to your specifications
by our modern equipment.

*Buy when you need —
Eliminate costly storage*

We sell an air-dried, uniform and
free flowing top dressing.

ASK THE MAN WHO HAS USED IT.

HENRY FRENZER

Area Code 847
658-5303

620 Webster St.
Algonquin, IL
60102