

WATER OR BLUEGRASS

Many of the touring golf professionals don't like to play their game on bluegrass fairways. Too many fliers, so they say. Hard to control the ball. I say, a box of triple bogies to you, sir. There are times when conditions on bentgrass fairways are not always perfect, either. Hitting a shot into the grain certainly will give different results than hitting a shot with the grain. When one hears the touring pro's complain about unsatisfactory playing conditions on bluegrass turf, the average golfers, the ones that really support the game and make it possible to balance the maintenance budget, hear these critical remarks and are ready to condemn the turfgrass on their course.

My purpose of writing this is not to criticize the golfer who has a problem with his score on the golf course, but to call to the attention of golfers the serious problem that we may be faced with in the near future—a shortage of water. As the population continues to increase and industrial markets increase to support a larger population, ground water levels have already receded significantly. It should be obvious to everyone that water levels will not increase in future years. A steady decline is inevitable. When the time comes that there is not enough water to satisfy everyone, you can be sure that golf course fairways will have a low priority. Golf courses in areas of California, Florida, and New York are at this time receiving water by allocation only.

Those of us who understand the growing habits of the grass plant know that one of the requirements of bent and poa annua is a relatively large amount of water. Without sufficient water the plant will die. This is not true with the bluegrass strain of grass. It will turn off color during periods of drought. One can get good lies on off color turf, normally better than on green lush turfgrass. During certain periods Kentucky bluegrass turf may look to be completely dead. However, after a good rain it is back to its original condition.

I remember years ago when the top touring golfers were Bobby Jones, Walter Hagen, Byron Nelson, Ben Hogan, Harry Cooper, and others. **They won many tournaments on bluegrass fairways with scores comparable to those that you see today and using equipment that was technically inferior to today's golf clubs.**

Therefore, golf courses should not be too hasty to change their bluegrass turf to bentgrass. There could be a time coming when fairway irrigation will be prohibited. Let us not be swayed by statements made by those who are only interested in their own financial benefit.

Ray Gerber-Editor

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THE WAY IT WAS by Bill Stupple

This article might be better entitled "Some Highlights of 35 Years of Trials and Tribulations as a Greenkeeper".

The whole story started when I went to work on the course at Exmoor Country Club in the spring of 1924. That is, I went to work on a regular basis. In fact, I had worked on the course as far back as 1917 digging weeds out of the greens. Women had been employed on this job, but the ones they had at Exmoor must have been pretty hot stuff because the workmen got to fighting over them and the girls had to be fired and caddies were hired to do the weeding. As I remember we got 25 cents an hour for a 9 hour day 5 days a week and caddied on Saturday and Sunday. Not bad for a 14 year old kid in those days. I later worked as a locker room boy and also as assistant caddie master, working on the course in the off season, early spring, late fall and even during the winters.

After 4 years and some months I became the greenkeeper and then my troubles began. I was informed one morning that the job was mine. There was no mention of salary or any kind of a contract. During said 4 years my salary had increased from \$125.00 per month to \$175.00 per month. We were paid once a month for many years. When my first pay day as the boss rolled around I found that my pay was still the same as before. So I went to the Green Chairman and said "See here now, since I am the greenkeeper I have a lot of responsibilities and I think I should have more money". He said, "I think you are right, Bill" and the next paycheck was for \$200.00.

I was originally hired as a "mechanic", there being two motors on the course, a Worthington tractor with a Model T Ford motor and a big electric motor in the shop. I will say that I went to night school to learn about auto mechanics. However, there was other machinery to take care of, like a 5-gang Worthington fairway mower, a Townsend Glorious triplex horse drawn, 5 putting green mowers, hand of course, one 5 foot sickle bar, one tee mower, assorted hand mowers and assorted cutting tools like scythes, sickles, sod cutters, etc., and three horses.

This discourse is probably boring to the young superintendent, but there is more to follow in future issues if the Editor O.K.'s it.

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Split crotches and limbs require use of long toggle bolts or cables and turnbuckles. This can be a complicated procedure and may best be done by a licensed arborist trained in these methods.

Tree work can be dangerous. Aside from the obvious hazard of falling from a tree, tree limbs are extremely heavy. Do not try to remove large limbs unless they are properly roped and tied.

Do not attempt to use a chain saw in a tree unless you have been properly trained to do so.

Before working on a damaged tree, make sure no limbs are lying across power lines. If branches are in contact with lines, call your power company. They have crews trained to correct such situations.

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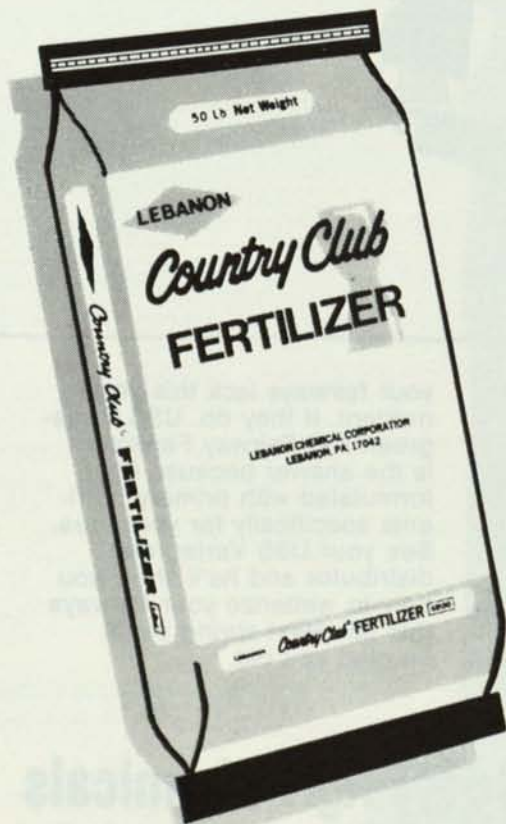
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1. "A ball rolling or lying near a bunker or sand trap may be played if the player feels he is in need of practice. If a player elects to practice, no strokes other than the first one made in the bunker shall be counted against said player. Should the ball fail to emerge after the first stroke, the faulty design of the bunker is deemed amply demonstrated and the skill of the player should not be penalized for a defect in construction over which he has no control..."

2. "A ball striking a tree while in flight shall be deemed not to have struck a tree unless the player making the stroke declares that it was deliberately aimed for. In this case, play shall cease momentarily while his partners congratulate him on his marksmanship. But if the player attests in good faith that it was in no sense his intention to strike the tree, then it is obviously a piece of bad luck that has no place in a scientific game. No penalty shall accrue to the player, who is therefore permitted to estimate the distance his ball would have traveled and to play the ball from that position....."

3. "There is no such thing as a lost ball. The ball is somewhere on the course and will be picked up eventually and pocketed by someone other than the owner, thus becoming not a lost but a stolen ball. A player suffering a stolen ball shall be entitled to cries of sympathy from his fellow players who shall crowd around him, importuning him not to compound the felony by charging himself with the loss of stroke. Upon returning to the clubhouse, the player shall apply to the professional for restitution of the stolen article since that worthy official always has a large supply of golf balls on hand....."

4. "In arriving at a judgement whether or not ground is under repair, for the purpose of lifting a ball unpleasantly situated without penalty, the player shall toss a coin. If it falls, the ground may be deemed under repair....."

5. "A putted ball that rims the cup and stays out shall be deemed to have dropped, since the occurrence shall be contrary to the laws of gravitation which supercedes the laws of golf. The same rule shall be in force for balls that pass over the hole and stay out, since it is a well known fact that any object attempting to maintain its position in the atmosphere without something to support it, must drop!!!"

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GREEN CHAIRMAN MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Canterbury CC green chairman, Mr. George Dawson, addressed the Northern Ohio GSCAA at the annual green chairman meeting at Youngstown CC giving his views on a green chairman's responsibilities as it relates to the superintendent.

Gentlemen:

It is with some trepidation that I address you. You superintendents in the audience have spent a lifetime dealing with green chairmen--and I have only 3 years trying to give Burdick a little couth. Therefore, I am going to speak randomly about several items that are important to me.

Within certain given limitations wherever you find a well-conditioned golf course you're going to find a good golf course superintendent. But that does not mean that you're going to find a good green chairman. So part of these remarks should cover the care and feeding of green chairmen.

I doubt if many of you realize that Bill Burdick has a PhD in psychology. When I first became green chairman, Bill was nervous and uptight about getting a tired old man of my years and demeanor in a position where I could perhaps make decisions. He got quite ill... and as a result of the illness he became deaf. Whenever I asked him to modify a green or change a trap or even mow the rough lower, he couldn't hear me. Whenever I talked to him about pension benefits, bonuses, salary increases, or nymphomaniacs, his hearing improved remarkably. It is incredibly important for green superintendents to turn a deaf ear to the suggestions of transient green chairmen whose only knowledge of agronomy is what they gathered from a Thoreau novel in their prepubic period.

Another point that I would make is that green superintendents cannot win with everyone, although after watching your performance last month at the Brown Derby Motel, you certainly have a better batting average with barmaids than most...You were told in agronomy school that working in a country club atmosphere is going to be at best difficult and at worst impossible. So when you hire on to a club where all members have a vote, you are in deep....You know that all clubs have at least one member who doesn't like the job you're doing or the height of the rough or something, and he is going to constantly agitate to the president or the green chairman about having you fired or at least change your habits. When you get a new chairman it is important for you to communicate with him as to who these people are so that he can be on guard as soon as he takes on the assignment. At the risk of being sacrilegious, if Christ had been a green superintendent, four of his disciples would have written to God complaining about his qualifications. Therefore, the green chairman's job is primarily one of being a foil or buffer for you. I frankly think that is his most important job.

In a magazine called *Golfdom*, I was quoted as saying that somehow a green chairman has to be precluded from building a monument to his tenure. The green superintendent's job is to forestall that monument unless it has some tremendous value. In that same article in *Golfdom* magazine a year or so ago, Peter Miller said: "It's an advantage to not have a chairman. I think I can better plan the direction the course is taking. Long-range plans can be developed". I don't mean this to be a debate between Peter and me, but boards of directors of private clubs take their respons-

ibilities very seriously, I agree with Peter that their disinclination to make long-range plans works as a detriment to the operation of the golf course. However, there is no way that a board of directors is going to turn \$100,000 to \$300,000 over to a green superintendent without having to be responsible for the monies expended on behalf of the golf course. Whether or not the green chairman is competent or capable of monitoring these monies, the conscience of the rest of the board of directors is relieved of apprehension about the use of the monies. Thus I don't think that there will be a near-term change at most clubs about the reporting structure of green superintendent to green chairman to board. Club presidents change almost every year. Each board is reluctant to plan past their tenure and few are willing to commit funds from the coffers of future boards.

I had hoped to entitle this speech, "The Future of Green Chairmen and Green Superintendents". Unfortunately my crystal ball is no better than anyone else's. However, as a personal thought, if golf courses as we know them today are to continue, costs must be cut astronomically. Let me quote a few numbers: In 1967 the dues in the clubs on the east side of Cleveland were about \$55.00 per month. Today they are \$125.00 a month. For the same period of time, the buying power of the dollar has declined 48 percent. Thus you can see in real terms that clubs have increased their relative costs over 25 percent faster than inflation. There are lots of ways to reduce overhead. From my point of view the first place to start would be in the kitchen during the winter months but I will not get into that in any great detail because that is outside our area of influence. However, a general manager of a club, can and should integrate long-range plans for food service with house and course maintenance. Those of you who are not General Manager or aspire thereto will want to look at all three factors projected ahead for ten years.

A second aspect for cost-cutting consideration is the golf course maintenance and capital equipment. Much of your equipment is maximized daily or weekly at any golf club but some of it could be used on two, three or four courses. Similarly, as the state of the art increases, compensation to qualified green superintendents has to increase commensurately. It may be that clubs will not be able to afford one. It may be that a green superintendent as we know him today will be gone.

With all the chemicals, licensing, and OSHA restrictions, etc., the superintendent may have to service two or three clubs in order: One, to enjoy the income which his degree of skill deserves, and two, make it possible for golfing to continue among people who are not filthy rich. This may, as Peter Miller discussed briefly last month require outside services, independent contractors. It may also require that golf courses not be kept as immaculate as they are today. Perhaps we will return to the golf links concept where certain aspects of the golf course were left wild, untended, as in Scotland. Golf courses are now competitive. Each vies with each other to have every blade of grass at uniform height, every tree trimmed, and every tee exactly horizontal in all directions. It may be necessary for people to relinquish some of that uniformity and esthetics for practical reasons. We may all end up with triplexed mowed greens, narrower fairways, shorter courses. I really don't think many clubs can stand the increase in costs based on the current curves.

With further incursions by IRS into corporate expense accounts, country clubs will have to rely on after-tax dollars. I tried to estimate the actual number

of members a Canterbury that are being financed completely or in part by expense accounts. I couldn't do it reliably. But my guess is that over half of the resident members expense a high percentage of their cost. Since green superintendents form the basic continuity of clubs—it might be advantageous for them to lead in the investigation of Contract Maintenance. Obviously if a superintendent contracts for 2 or 3 or 4 courses, there will be fewer jobs. And this is not the GCSAA is committed to. It will take a lot of courage to render yourselves out of a job. It will take courage to become independent contractors and give up the seniority and fringe benefits that clubs are now sponsoring. But I think the problem is real!

Let's come back to realities, the maintenance of the golf course requires only about 15 to 25 percent of the cash flow of the country club. But the golf course is the basic reason for the club. Therefore, if the superintendents and the chairmen can be in the vanguard of cutting costs and being more efficient the clubs will survive.

The GSCAA has been a leader in talking about potential problems—last month's discussion of the place of Unions was very illuminating. Bill Rice's remarks were germane. Peter Miller's confessions were super. You didn't drive all the way to this delightful club to have some half-drunk, short haired green chairman tell you that you picked the wrong career. Hopefully I am not saying that! What I am trying to say is that through GSCAA you have a group of young, well educated professional people. That you are the only group that has a continuous relationship with golf courses. That the path for the future of these golf courses lies largely in your hands.

Waiting for the club presidents and chairmen to anticipate the future is wrong. They are only interested in living this year out because there will be another president to argue about the dues structure next year. Golf course costs are insidious. Those of you who represent golf courses instead of country clubs know how efficient you can be right now. What I am asking is that you look ahead ten years and anticipate the changes.

These remarks are mine. They do not reflect the thinking of Bill Burdick, the Board, members of Canterbury, or my wife.

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