

Green Section Meet Reveals and Team

By T. H. RIGGS-MILLER

THE annual meeting of the U. S. G. A. Green Section, January 10, at Biltmore Hotel, New York City, was presided over by H. Y. Barrow, former president of the Metropolitan Golf association. First of the speakers was Wynant D. Vanderpool, chairman of the U. S. G. A. Green section, who, in reading the annual report, explained that the meeting had been reduced to a single session for Friday afternoon instead of three sessions as heretofore. The reason given was that the field meetings during the year made the former length of annual meeting unnecessary.

Other speakers were Dr. K. F. Kellerman, associate chief of the bureau of Plant Industry; Prof. F. H. Hillman, of the Seed laboratory of the U. S. department of agriculture; C. S. Lee, green-chairman of the Jekyll Island G. C., Brunswick, Ga.; Dr. T. P. Hinman, from the Druids Hill C. C., Atlanta, Ga., and Dr. Monteith, of the Green section.

Dr. Kellerman spoke of the recent fertilizer experiments on tobacco, and how a series of investigations along the same line might be carried out on turf grass plants. Professor Hillman's subject was the different phases of bent grass seed.

Mr. Lee told of the ravages of the mole cricket on sandy soils of Georgia. From what could be gathered, once these pests infest your golf course the best thing to do is to move somewhere else, as has been done at Jekyll Island.

Dr. Hinman, the next speaker, also is from Georgia. However, in the section from which he comes there is no trouble with the mole cricket. Yet there is something equally bad to contend with, and that is nut grass. The Doctor gives the same advice as Mr. Lee to anyone who is contemplating laying out a course on ground infested with nut grass, "Don't."

Dr. Hinman went on to give a very interesting talk on methods adopted by a number of golf courses in the bermuda grass region of the South. He explained

that bermuda grass turns brown or dies with the first spell of cold weather, although the putting qualities of the greens are not destroyed immediately. It does become stubby towards the middle of winter, and if play be persisted in, the come-back of the grass in the spring would be retarded.

Two Sets of Greens

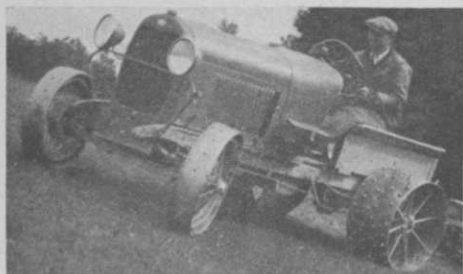
For many years sand greens were used in Atlanta. Then came the gradual development of grass. Like many other Southern courses, they shaved down the bermuda grass to the roots and sowed rye and red top, which would give fair putting greens until it was pushed out by the bermuda in the spring. Atlantans play golf twelve months a year, so the system of using temporary greens for an indefinite period each year was found to be unsatisfactory. Therefore, they have devised a scheme of having one very large green divided in halves or two separate greens entirely—the latter being voted the best method.

The procedure then is to prepare winter greens about October by sowing rye grass. This is ready for play about the first of December. A very satisfactory putting surface is maintained for a month or six weeks, then poa annua takes possession and forms extraordinarily good greens until about June, when the bermuda pushes it out again. By this time the bermuda greens, which have been entirely covered with straw or cotton-seed hulls (for the double purpose of keeping the grass at an even temperature and preventing the germination of poa annua) are ready for play. There are a number of bermuda species, some of which make greens as perfect as the fine Northern grasses.

At the conclusion of the meeting Dr. Monteith gave a resume of the green section work for the year. Experimental stations have been started north, southeast

(Continued on Page 102)

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Green Section Meet Stirs Greenkeeper

(Continued from Page 42)

and west, as well as a number of demonstration plots sponsored by individual clubs. The seed, fertilizer, etc., are supplied by the Green section.

Having attended regularly the Green Section meetings in New York since their inauguration (January, 1924), one feels (if we except for the moment an interesting paper now and then like Dr. Hinman's this year, Dr. Lipman's last year, Prof. Leach's paper on Japanese beetles the year before) very much like Omar when he said:

"Myself, when young, did eagerly frequent
Doctor and saint, and heard great argu-
ment,

But evermore came out by that same door
As in I went."

It seems to be the same tale every year. So well put in the Metropolitan Green Section Bulletin, December, 1929: "Nothing very definite in the way of conclusion can be drawn at this time. However, many observations were recorded during the season." This was all very well for the first few years, but one feels that after seven or eight years of observations by the Green section more definite information should be forthcoming. The reason for this rambling of mine seems quite obvious.

First and foremost, the practical greenkeepers feel they have been ignored, notwithstanding the fact that the attendance at these annual meetings would not exceed a dozen if the greenkeepers were to absent themselves. Their resentment naturally is reflected in a feeling of antagonism instead of the feeling of co-operation that should exist.

Secondly—The heads of the Green section, when not answering correspondence, are kept so busy rushing from one end of the country to the other that very little time can be given to actual investigations.

Thirdly—Greenkeepers disagree with the manner in which most of the experiments

have been carried out. For instance, the turf gardens at Arlington were first started on the basis that nobody knew anything about the growing of turf grasses scientifically. This was a fallacy. The fundamentals of turf were well established two decades before the Green section came into being.

Questions Value of Location

It is a fact that the large majority of golf courses are within the limits of the temperate zone. It is also a fact that the fine turf grasses are at home in this area. Therefore, any study or investigation of these grasses must be carried out in the temperature zone. The nearer northern grasses are grown to the southern limit of culture the less satisfaction they give, and southern grasses are not worth planting in the north. From this can be seen that any experiments of trial plots as far south as Washington have relatively little value as to how northern grasses would act in their native habitat. Nevertheless this is what has taken place, and we are asked to believe the results of these experiments, which include the condemnation of many of the grasses that have withstood the test of time, as to their usefulness and durability in the north. I mention red fescue as being one.

I know of no agrostologist that has carried out a reliable investigation of northern turf grasses in the northern zone. The most specific data we had was gleaned from the turf garden of the late J. B. Olcott at South Manchester, Conn. The most beautiful piece of turf in his whole garden was the much maligned red fescue. Fredrick Taylor, the efficiency expert, bought the plots after Mr. Olcott's death and transferred them to Philadelphia in 1912.

That there should be an experimental station in Washington everybody is agreed, but it is hard to see any value in the demonstration plots which are scattered about on different golf courses. In the first place, skilled investigators in almost any line are scarce, but when it comes to turf they certainly are at a premium. That a skilled investigator is necessary goes without saying. Therefore, we are forced to ask: Where are they, and the money to pay them, to come from?

The mere fact that you grow a piece of turf here or there means nothing at all. The intermittent visits of a first agrostologist or his second-class deputy will prove less. The individuals or crew looking after the different plots have their own ideas as

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to treatments. Although hard and fast rules may be laid down, there is nothing to prevent those doing the actual work from carrying out a little investigation of their own, just to prove the other fellow was wrong. If it turns out all right, he will either put it in his book of secrets or boast of it. If it goes wrong, he forgets that anything was done other than ordered.

There is one logical way to remedy these ills, and that is to find out what the guardians of the golf courses, the greenkeepers, want. This will vary with locality somewhat, but not so much as to be beyond the range of a regularly established agricultural or botanical experiment station. Let each station be the center of activities for a given area. These stations are equipped by men and means to carry out experiments in the proper way. It is better to have one man dedicate his entire

time to this phase as it is done at New Brunswick, N. J. This arrangement is due in no small measure to the New Jersey Greenkeepers association, whose persistent efforts, together with those of the Green section, induced members of their clubs to form a committee to ask and get an appropriation of \$5,000 a year from the New Jersey legislature. It was given with the understanding, of course, that anyone wanting information on turf production, whether it be the lawn of a lowly cottage or a broad-acred mansion, they could have it.

Nearly all the experiments on grass at the present time are from one angle only, that of sowing different grasses on the untreated soil of the station at which they are being tried, then using different top-dressings and fertilizers after the turf is established. This is a process that no golf course constructor of experience would attempt were he to build a golf course in the vicinity. He would at least use a given quantity of manure or fertilizer, or both, to the acre on the fairways, and use a greater degree of care in the preparation of the seed bed for the putting greens. It seems that these investigators would aim nearer the goal if they, too, would extend their experiments to the preparation of the soil in different ways before sowing rather than keep on with a lop-sided investigation, trying to get results from methods not used in actual practice. There are three to four thousand greenkeepers in America. It is doubtful if there are any six who use precisely the same methods in course upkeep. In other words, there is no school of greenkeeping in the sense that exists in trades, professions or arts. For instance, the way bricklayers, carpenters, plumbers, doctors, dentists, etc., go about a given



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problem in their respective lines will vary very little over the length and breadth of the land.

There is no reason why greenkeeping practice cannot be made uniform in the different localities. There must be a best possible method. Therefore, if the Green Section is to remain and extend as a factor in the life of American golf it will have to co-ordinate all these agencies.

Green Section Tells His Policy and Performance

(Continued from Page 43)

that may supply a solid foundation of a clear understanding.

As one indication of the Green section's trail-blazing for the aid of greenkeepers it might be stated that the present budget of the section is the sixth on which has been carried an item for New Jersey work. This work was started by Prof. Musgrave, following the advice of Doctors Piper and Oakley in 1921. In 1925 the work was enlarged and Green section funds appropriated with the hope that state aid would be forthcoming. At

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that time, it is doubted that most greenkeepers were aware of the existence of an agricultural experiment station at New Brunswick. The valuable aid of the New Jersey Greenkeepers' association in securing the state legislature's appropriation was forthcoming after the turf work had been under way for some time and it was plainly evident that more money was needed.

Regarding the comment on the soil employed for the section's experiment, it must be admitted that criticism is not sound when one understands that research has repeatedly demonstrated that treatments which remedy disorders in the poorest soil will work on the best soils where such problems are minor in comparison.

In substance, the above represents a Green section advocate's answer to the Riggs-Miller statement, and in it there are several illuminating paragraphs that may help a lot to get the Green section and greenkeepers working as a happy and effective tandem. By all concerned, it is a consummation devoutly to be wished.

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