



The first green at Inverness. The hole is 391 yards. No. 10 green is in the valley at the left.

# What Makes a Greenkeeper Success in His Work?

Continuing the Observations of the Veteran

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EVERY now and then we will have a visitor from quite a good ways off—the president of a brand new club or chairman of some green-committee. The first thing the visitor wants to see is, of course, our grass nursery. We go over to the space back of the barn. (Oh, yes, we still have and foster the old white barn, made famous by O. B. Keeler.) There, Mrs. Number Ten's children are being brought up and developed to the point of going out to do a mature job wherever needed. We are particularly proud of that breeding ground with its area of perfected putting surface, sufficient to provide plugs for any spot in any green that might languish for one natural cause or another. The visitor usually asks what strain of bent grass we prefer. We come back at him with the question, "What have you?" We have previously noted that he said they had their greens nearly ready to play upon. Thereupon, he tells us, and if it is any one of the numerous good breeds, we will candidly tell him, "That is the kind to love and encourage."

Throughout this whole drama of the golf course it is truly said, "If you have

eighteen first-class putting greens, you have a golf course; otherwise you have not." Your greenkeeper must know his job. No man with a "pick up" experience and with little or no training concerning soils, plant life and the whole range of maintenance should assume such duties. If the man has egotism and stubbornness, coupled with his lack of both fundamental knowledge and experience, he is surely a costly experiment for the club. The old saying that "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing" has its worst example in such a greenkeeper. And yet, in these days of intensive golf course construction, the effort to keep pace with the demand for more and yet more golf courses for clubs and for public and semi-public fee courses has launched plenty of half-baked greenkeepers abroad in the land. It is one of the curious things about humans that these underdone chaps are nearly every one of the bull-headed breed I have mentioned.

## Training the Greenkeeper

Now there is no need of any club, city government or company running any risk

of getting an incompetent greenkeeper today. They are not out to conduct kindergartens for the development of greenkeepers. Every big club has its veteran greenkeeper. From his organization he is able to supply an experienced man who has, as a rule, grown up under his guidance. Such master greenkeepers "catch them young." Oftentimes as caddies who so love the open air life that they want to learn this highly useful profession of greenkeeping grow up in it.

Now schools also are giving a hand and providing valuable facilities for combining science with the practical lessons of work under men with long and successful experience.

What, after all, would the game of golf, its daily and hourly play, its countless events and its championships galore amount to without the greenkeeper's devoted labors? He sets the stage. At the

breaking of the dawn he and his assistants are here and there and everywhere in those broad acres doing the many needful things that the game may begin and go on. Each man who has a certain group of greens as his specialty is diligent in jealous rivalry of the friendly sort. His greens must be the best on the course, week in and week out. Such a man knows that there is no green that is good unless it is a *clean green*. So, if a little weed breaks through that otherwise perfect surface, he swoops down upon it and out it comes, roots and all. Likewise, every imperfect spot gets its plug. He must also give intelligent judgment to setting the hoies. The holes in a green, while being located to bring out the sporting qualities of the greens surface, should never be placed in unfair or tricky places. Such bad judgment has, on occasions, wrecked a qualifying round in an important event.

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### Golfing Greenkeepers

This brings out a point that is fundamental. Every greenkeeper should be a golf player. If he is not, there are enormous odds against him knowing where a hole should be set on any green and what a putting surface should be—besides all the rest of the playing conditions governing his work. There are, of course, a few greenkeepers who do not play and never have, maybe never will, but I have always believed that they are handicapped to just that extent. Surely it's a hard blow for one of them, when a putting surface looks all right to him and he sees the chairman of the green-committee coming along with his bunch, playing "syndicates" and everything—and missing a short putt. Wow! "Why, Doctor," the greenkeeper says, "I don't see how you missed that one—this is one of my best greens." Whereat "Doc" turns and says with a biting sarcasm, "What the hell do *you* know about it? You never putted a golf ball in your life."

It's just "too bad" that said greenkeeper never learned, at least, to putt. There are probably no better conditioned eighteen greens in all the Toledo district than those of a greenkeeper who can play any course in the United States in the seventies. He was practically born on a golf course, "teethed on a golf club"—was a caddy, a golf professional and, for many years, now, a greenkeeper. He loves his vocation.

Have you, as a green-chairman, ever attended a meeting of greenkeepers? If you haven't you have missed an impressive exhibition of men eager to add to their own knowledge and help their comrades with problems that have been solved by the knowledge and resourcefulness of some of the group. Such meetings and the regular routine of greenkeeping work always emphasize that there's no teacher like actual working experience. When a man has had that and really uses his brains, then he can rate as a real greenkeeper.

It's up to him then to have his course do his talking for him.

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