

# Conditioning New Course Is Case of Local Study

By EDWARD B. DEARIE, JR.

A QUESTION frequently asked is "How can a new course be properly conditioned for play the first year? This is rather difficult to answer due to the varied conditions of turf culture.

The greatest difficulty which presents itself to most of the new course problems is the varying conditions of soil, climate, rainfall and duration of season.

The greatest single factor is that the construction work be properly finished. This fact alone is one that cannot be over-estimated in order to secure the required results, such as the right depth of plowing; proper grading and leveling of all surface depressions and ditches, so as to insure proper surface drainage; the covering of all the clay areas with top loam; and last, and most important, the proper cultivation of the seed bed.

Improperly prepared fairway surfaces have cost clubs thousands of dollars in seed wastage yearly. A fairway surface that is properly pulverized, leveled and fertilized will germinate all the live seed that is sown, but a fairway that is rough with unbroken soil clods, causing the weed to bury itself, is wasteful and usually disappointing in germination.

## Greenkeeper a Grass Nurse.

Too many look upon the conditioning of the soil as relatively unimportant, and believe that the grass seed manages to grow in some mysterious manner. Knowledge of the functioning of the soil and of the seed germination process is very desirable to all studious greenkeepers in charge of a new course.

What tasks face the greenkeeper in that interval after the new course is built and before it is ready for play? No specific rules can be laid down, Dearie says in this article, basing this statement on the fact that the major maintenance guide at any new course is the sum total of local conditions.

Improving a new golf course is a complicated problem and the greenkeeper responsible for the results is shouldered with no little burden. He must be a first class greenkeeper, backed with considerable and diversified experience and have a sound workable plan in all phases of greenkeeping, such as fertilization,

topdressing, turf diseases, irrigation, drainage, mowing and general landscaping and grounds upkeep, which are all part of a new course problems the first year. Turf requires considerable nursing during its early stages of growth.

He is then in a position to see the course develop from the start. He will be better able to determine the method of conditioning the course for play.

It is in the initial work of any golf course that there is the one chance in the life of a course to plan the seeding of the fairways, the largest area of upkeep properly.

The proper supervision at this time, in my judgment, lays the foundation for economical upkeep. In the past golf clubs have engaged the greenkeeper after the construction is completed, starting where the contractors left off. This is unfair to the greenkeeper and does not give him a chance to prove his worth.

## Too Late to Correct.

It is in the initial work that the greenkeeper can prove his ability even more than in the developed stages of the course. He then has a full knowledge of the soil drainage system and water supply, in fact he can make notes of any peculiar condition existing and work accordingly.

Work that has been done before the greenkeeper has been engaged is invariably never corrected and he starts off with a handicap which in many cases it is impossible for him to overcome.

Experience teaches us that a greenkeeper must understand the various elements of nature before he can hope to prove his ability; therefore, it is necessary for him to understand his course's physical condition in order to attain his highest possible efficiency to the club as a greenkeeper.

Therefore, the club that engages a greenkeeper at the outset will make no mistake in expecting a highly developed golf course, as there can be no first class golf course unless the turf is of the right quality.

There can be no great satisfaction in courses, no matter how well designed, where the fairways, tees and greens have a poor stand of grass because of faulty soil conditioning.

One of the common mistakes with a new course is opening it too soon for play, as it prevents the establishing of a firm root growth. In order to get this growth it is necessary to let top growth get a little longer in the spring, or at least two months following the fall sowing.

Additional time should be allowed for tees and greens to mature due to their limited area of space.

The development of irrigation for fairway watering has made great changes in the methods of conditioning new courses today. Heretofore a great number of courses suffered for long intervals without rain which caused considerable weed growth and loss of turf, requiring seeding every fall.

Today we have overcome a great deal of this duplication of work and may maintain excellent fairways year after year. They require water the same as the greens and tees and it must not be forgotten that constant irrigation of turf is in itself a method of fertilization. Water flowing over the turf deposits fine particles of organic matter and other forms of nutrition that aid materially in maintaining a healthy turf. Water has a two fold purpose in turf culture. First to improve the texture; second, to sustain the grass growth during the dry periods of the year.

Drainage, like water, has a direct effect upon maintenance expense. It is the foundation of all well maintained courses and no club would attempt to build a course and expect to develop turf growth without the aid of drainage. Not only is

the duration of the playing season extended by satisfactory drainage, but the number of playing days during the season are increased, since play is possible immediately after a storm. All new course plans should include provisions for adequate drainage and properly surveyed.

The courses in this country are on such widely differing kinds of topography and under so many varying climatic conditions that they alone have a direct bearing on what results are to be obtained and what is to be done in developing a new course. No standardized method of procedure can be applied.

### NEW BLUE-BOOK IS KEYSTONE OF SPORTS LIBRARY

**T**HE *Blue Book of Sports*, published by Everett L. Sanders, 407 E. Pico St., Los Angeles, is the most complete sports reference and historical work published in the United States. A copy of this book on the reading table at the country club will be dog-eared in three weeks. Every major sport, and some of the minors like archery, checkers, cricket and horse-shoe pitching, is handled with such thoroughness and accuracy that the book is plainly a gold mine for the sport enthusiast and sport writers. Scotty Chisholm edited the golf department of the book and has done a masterly job of it. He contributes 60 pages of interesting and valuable material, much of it exclusive.

The book's only defect is that it will put a stop to many pleasant debates, and reduce the extent of sucker bets, by making the facts so readily available.

**W**HEN good men are kept on the greens force during the winter months, one of the really profitable jobs to which they can be applied is the removal of dead trees and underbrush and the trimming of dead branches.

Cutting of wood for clubhouse use should be done during the winter. It's no fun to swing an axe on a hot July day. The club has no cause for worry about wasted money; the greensman earns every cent pushing a pruning saw, wielding an axe and climbing up trunks to clean out dead branches.—George Caskey.

**A**LL sand-traps guarding a green should be visible from the approach area. A golfer is entitled to know of its presence and modify his shot accordingly if he so desires.