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Season's Turf Troubles Plumb Depths of Woe

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GRIM PHANTOMS of pestilence visited the golf courses of the United States during the season now approaching its end and left in their wake an appalling destruction. Large and small brown patch, pythium, and cut worms and web worms, together with the burning and scalding to which no part of the affected courses seemed immune, all combined to give the greensmen an agonizing midsummer's nightmare.

Reports from the section east of the Rockies and North of about the 37th parallel indicate that, conservatively, 70 per cent of the golf courses suffered injury to a noticeable degree. The trouble was no respecter of persons or of courses, as courses that hitherto had been internationally famed for condition were mutilated badly by attacks that stubbornly defied positive discovery of their source.

Suddenness and severity of the attacks had the practical and laboratory experts answering S.O.S. calls and arriving at the scene of the disaster to frequently confess as much bewilderment as the local sufferers. The season's experience has served to emphasize the often mysterious character of turf development and in that respect has reminded golfers of the exacting and expansive qualifications that must be met by a competent greenkeeper. It also has made it plain that turf research

is not a matter of over-night results due to the diverse and concealed factors involved.

Business Built on Turf

A reflection of the prompt effect of unfavorable course condition on club and ball sales could be supplied in volumes by the pros and manufacturers. When the seriousness of the situation at the courses began to be felt generally, about June 10 to 15, the playing goods makers noticed a slump in business decidedly more abrupt than the mid-season temporary recession is in years of normal turf conditions. With the emergency measure of the course superintendents restoring an inviting playing condition the pro shop sales promptly quickened. The unusually long duration of the vicious heat wave didn't help sales any.

Some of the close-up students of the trouble attribute a good part of the evil to players' insistence on extreme close cutting of the greens. They cite, in support of their theory, adjoining tees of the same grasses and same maintenance practice that escaped injury. In some cases, however, greens that have been cut to the quick have been immune from trouble. Such disconcerting observations of fine turf areas that adjoin and have been subjected to the same treatment, but have had widely varying experiences in immu-

nity to the current season's destructive influences, show the difficulty of making an accurate diagnosis and of determining the correct restorative and preventive treatment.

Saving Goes Blooey

It has been impressed on the golf course maintenance field that much practical experimental work and study needs to be done, and careful records kept of the performances and governing conditions before the course superintendent can express confidence in the favorable outcome of any battle with nature on his own particular battlefield. Just where the greenkeeper will get the time and the money to devote to his own experimental plot remains unknown. This was to be the year of budgets that would get through the needle's eye with plenty of elbow room left. Labor forces were slashed and in a number of instances GOLFDOM'S investigators believe that the sorry condition of courses was the direct result of the conscientious and shy course superintendent being reluctant to spend at the first definite showing of a serious emergency. Clubs that thought they would clamp down on expenditure for brown patch preventatives rushed to save their greens by having expressed to them shipments of quantities sufficient to give heroic treatments, or paid the toll of tardiness by contributing to the advance in the market price of sod cut to greens length, or by the cost and inconvenience of temporary greens and new sowing on the destroyed greens.

Clubs that had insufficient water supplies learned the fallacy of holding off on making their water equipment adequate and will pay a premium tuition fee to that dear teacher, experience, as they sign larger checks for repair, labor, seed and fertilizer this fall.

Optimists see in the history of the season's turf troubles a number of bright sides, particularly in the aspects of turf research interest and co-operation, appreciation of the course superintendent's problems, and in the right balance between true thrift and expensive tightness. On this latter subject the Westwood C. C. (Cleveland district) house organ, *The Putter*, has something profound to say in presenting the financial status of that club for the first six months of 1931 as compared with the first six months of 1930. *The Putter* comments on the figures:

"A careful examination of the foregoing table (comparative income and expendi-

ture) will indicate an economy that has been practiced all along the line. Of course it is a question, and the directors know that it is so, whether some of the economies have not been too drastic. The cutting down of maintenance of course expenses can be carried too far. But no doubt later in the year when the financial year is nearer its end, fertilization and seeding or whatever may be needed will be carried forward. Unless maintenance is carried on practically all of the time the condition of the course will get beyond control."

And there you have the case at a lot of clubs. The directors have the commendable ambition of operating economically and for that reason are exposed to the temptation of a temporary reduction of judicious expense that merely means passing the buck to their successors, for it is certain their successors will have to plunge into the members' pockets eventually to bring the plant back into good shape. A golf course or clubhouse can go back ages in just two years of neglect enforced by a penny wise and pound foolish policy.

So strikingly severe have been the turf troubles of this summer that a club fortunate enough to discover curable causes of its distress is not going to hesitate at approving whatever appropriation within its command is required to set things aright. Perhaps, on that account, we shall see a higher and more soundly scientific standard of course maintenance washed into view by the tears that have been shed this year.

L. A. Young Plays Milk-Wagon Stymie Into Hospital

L. A. YOUNG, Detroit capitalist who is financial sponsor of Walter Hagen's successful venture in the golf club manufacturing business, is recovering from injuries suffered when he curled his hastening automobile around a sudden stymie laid by a milk wagon and holed out on a concrete wall.

Mr. Young's friends, viewing the ruins of his automobile, proceeded to shop about for Gates Ajar floral pieces. The action was decidedly premature as Young was bandaged but very much present at the annual meeting of the L. A. Young Co. golf salesmen a few days after his mishap. Pleasant figures on the Hagen line business to date this year are said to have had considerable to do with Mr. Young's amazing recovery.