

Green Section Digs in Dirt and Lab to Save a Fortune

By HERB GRAFFIS

SPORTS writers who have trailed through the devious paths of amateur sport from the over-emphasis of college football to the Machiavellian politics of the U. S. Lawn Tennis association return from their explorations with wonderous tales of amateur sport enterprise that has no kindred operation in the entire field of sport. They tell of the Green Section of the United States Golf association but in vague terms that only hint at what the Green Section is helping to do in cutting the cost of golf and to improve playing conditions.

Very few club officials have any idea of the tremendously valuable work the Section is doing. The greenkeepers know better because the men who are responsible for course condition put it up to the Green Section to work on problems for which the superintendent hasn't time, money, research facilities or research training. The Section has no machinery for blowing its own horn and hasn't the temperament to pat itself on the back. Its publicity is confined to the Green Section *Bulletin*, an excellent periodical devoted to course maintenance problems.

But despite this lack of acquaintance with the Section's work, there is a growing conviction among club officials that USGA membership, even if it meant only the availability of Green Section assistance, is today's outstanding club operating bargain. The USGA is conscious of this and despite the stress of the times the Section's budget of approximately \$40,000 annually is the biggest single item in USGA expenditures. But as research costs go, \$40,000 is a tiny item for a business that spends more than \$50,000,000 annually for course maintenance. The Section's budget figures about 8/100ths of one per cent of the national annual maintenance bill or less than a half cent per round of all golf played in the U. S. during 1931.

Surely, in view of demonstrated value of the Green Section and its sharply limited financial resources, the golf clubs ought to be able to figure out a way in which the

Section would have at its command enough money to handle the work with which it is burdened by virtue of its essential character.

Although the portion of each club's USGA dues that goes to the Green Section activities is uniform, the use of the Section's facilities naturally benefits most in dollars-and-cents those clubs spending the most money although the service to smaller clubs that have to make each red cent count is of incalculable value. It appears that some revision of the financial plan for conducting the Green Section might be made in a way compatible with plain principles of good business and good sportsmanship.

Nipping a \$10,000 Plot.

Definite instances of hard cash savings effected by Green Section watchfulness and service abound although the Section itself does no boasting about its financial returns to its supporters.

GOLFDOM'S snoopers recently ran across an incident strikingly indicative of the Green Section's value. In January a shipment of bent grass chaff was received at New York from the Netherlands. The shipment of 10,023 pounds was valued at \$225. This was the first of two shipments of this material which, for the greater part probably will be sold by unscrupulous dealers to unsuspecting golf clubs at \$1.00 a pound.

Roughly that means \$10,000 of golf club money thrown away and the reputations of a number of course superintendents marred. Clubs using the facilities of the Green Section are not going to be victimized by this "bargain" sale of worthless chaff, which simply means that if all the clubs were using the Section the saving in this single case would account for almost a quarter of the organization's annual budget.

Reputable seed houses doing business with golf clubs are aware of the authoritative status of the Green Section as we learn that there are 600 letters from one seed company in the Section's files.

There is no way of estimating how much money golf clubs have wasted on poor seed during the last 5 years but testimony from experienced and thoroughly trustworthy seedsmen puts the amount at several times the Green Section budget during that period. Examination of the files brings to light many cases of clubs sending in samples of alleged high-class and certainly high-priced bent seed that was either bent grass chaff or Illinois redtop.

Stealing With Stolons.

The Green Section makes no definite recommendations as to the kind of grass to be used on courses but definitely warns against the use of certain undesirable grasses. The Section now makes it possible for clubs to check up on the identification of varieties if they chose to use stolons on their putting greens instead of following the old practice of risking big losses by using improperly named varieties.

Clubs and turf nurserymen are taking advantage of the Section's bent identification service to clear away the confusion occasioned by early carelessness in propagation and the desire for speed and big profits when the bent business was in its infancy.

Not long ago a club insisted on buying a certain strain of bent for its 18 greens. The strain is one which tests already had proved definitely undesirable for putting greens. Present condition of the greens and dissatisfaction of the membership confirm the findings of the Green Section. Now the club stands to lose about \$1,500 spent for stolons, plus cost of planting, loss of playing time and excess amount spent for disease control. If this club had made use of the Green Section service its saving in the solitary instance referred to above, would have paid its USGA dues for more than 50 years.

Share in Benefits.

The financial savings of the Green Section extend not only to member clubs but to a great many clubs which are not supporting the work? These profit from the activities of the Green Section research through the close association of the Section work with many of the seed, fertilizer and other supply dealers. We have previously referred to more than 600 letters to the Section in connection with a single seed company. Many individual letters in this file deal with more than half a dozen separate turf problems. This company

follows the Section's results closely and passes the information to its clients. That company contributes toward the work but \$4.00 in the form of a *Bulletin* subscription. In many instances greenkeepers and green-committee members of clubs which are not members of the USGA and therefore not supporting the work, argue that they get nothing new from the Green Section for the simple reason that the Section's information must be passed out frequently to other organizations and there are no patent rights on any of its findings. There is one green-chairman who has never asked his club to join the USGA for he argues that his club is not in a position to derive any benefit from the Association or the Green Section. This very chairman will argue until imps skate that the only grass that is worth a blankety blank on golf greens in his opinion is Metropolitan bent. He apparently can't realize that his club obtained the Metropolitan bent indirectly from the Green Section and without the encouragement of the Green Section by USGA officials in the early days there would probably have been no development of such strains of grasses. His club originally used lime as the sole fertilizer for fairways until he learned that lime did not take the place of fertilizers rich in nitrogen for fairway improvement. He now uses the kind of fertilizers that have been checked up and recommended by the Section but he gets the recommendation through the fertilizer houses with which he deals and which in turn keep in close touch with Green Section work and modify their formulas on its recommendations. His club is in the snow-mold region and he has had greens with at least 50% of the turf killed with this disease until he learned that bichloride of mercury and calomel would control it. He now uses these chemicals frequently but since he got the observation from somewhere else he does not feel that he owes it to the Green Section in spite of the fact that these control treatments were developed under Green Section supervision. He also uses bichloride of mercury or calomel for the control of brown-patch, and after years of weedy greens he finally discovered that his chief source was in compost after someone had tipped him off to the recommendations of the Section on this treatment. Altogether this club probably might conservatively be figured as having saved at least \$1,000 a year entirely as the result of Green Section information and yet this club will not give

credit to whom credit is due and will not dig into its pockets for the \$30 membership fee in the USGA out of which the Green Section work is financed.

Possibly, after all you can't blame this chairman for the Green Section is not in the business of press agenting itself. But some merited press-agenting and information on the Section's vital work is necessary at this time, so GOLFDOM takes the task upon itself.

There'll be some more close-ups on the USGA Green Section's work in July GOLFDOM.

OPERATING TIPS

Notes on Innovations in the Chicago District

EVANSTON G. C. promoted bird-house building contest this past winter among its caddies, as one of series of activities planned by Caddie Chairman J. M. Kraft-hefer, and Caddie Master Frank Collins. Twenty-three examples of boys' handicraft, varying in elaborateness from wren houses to 7-story martin houses were completed. Cash prizes were awarded; club also bought all entries.

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Elmhurst G. C. negotiating with Interfraternity Club of Chicago whereby a number of latter's members will become equity members in Elmhurst.

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Euclid Hills C. C. presented by Mrs. W. H. Sapp, wife of club's president, with set of 18 hand-made greens flags.

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Glen Oak C. C. has "Greeters Committee," consisting of one man in each row of locker room. Duty of these men to assist new members to get acquainted and to arrange golf games.

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Illinois G. C. has issued books containing \$20 in coupons to be used by members in paying caddies and in settling for pro-shop purchases.

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Nordic C. C. avoids shouting and confusion around first tee by using recently installed microphone which connects with loud-speaker in caddie-house. Caddies crowding around first tee is thus entirely eliminated.

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Olympia Fields C. C. economizing in all departments of club except entertainment

features, on which present Board has decided there must be no let-up. Make club activities so attractive members won't stay away and departmental volume throughout club will stand up, believe the Olympia bosses.

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Ravisloe C. C. saving expenses by closing men's grill, formerly located in locker building, and opening one in clubhouse near main kitchen. Thus, same crew can prepare and serve food to both golfers in shirt sleeves and patrons of main dining room.

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Edgewood Valley C. C. has this plank in its 1932 platform: "Have green-fees reasonable and not prohibitive, because the men who entertain pay more than their proportionate share of the upkeep of the club."

British Pros Troubled by Members' Slow Pay

PROFESSIONAL golfers in many parts of the country are suffering from slow settlements by their members. This reacts on the wholesaler, who has in turn to wait for his accounts. Anthony Spalding, the well-known golf writer, referring to the subject in the "Star" states: "Three professionals at big clubs in Surrey are today owed £1000, £650 and £500. They would think they were on a good thing if the debtor accounts were to be paid off at the rate of ten per cent. per month. Two of these professionals compared notes and found that one well-known amateur, who is a member of both their clubs, owed £48 and £25 respectively. He is also a member of other clubs, and is on the black list. These difficulties have a reactionary effect. Some professionals who employed three now employ only two assistants, and the tax on the resources of the professionals' benevolent fund last year was, and continues to be without precedent."

—*Golf Monthly, Edinburgh.*

PGA Membership Hits Record Figure

REPORT FROM Albert Gates, business administrator of PGA of America, shows that membership in the master pro organization was 111 greater on May 25 than the figure of the same date in 1931.