

New Members, More Green Fees, Brought by Our Good Fairways

By PAUL BROCKHAUSEN

Greenkeeper, Blue Mound Country Club, Milwaukee

MOST golf is played in the driest time of the year and by far the greatest number of shots are made on the fairways. So it's the fairways that really count. That's what determines the attitude of members toward their club. The greens are no longer much of a problem. We have recognized the importance of good greens so long that practically all courses have good greens. But if you are going to have a club at all these days, you have to keep your fairways in condition, too. Because if you don't the members will find some other use for the money they would spend for dues. So you'll not only lose dues but you'll also lose the extra green-fees these vanishing members will take with them.

Our experience has been that because the Blue Mound course was kept in such excellent shape we've actually added over 60 new members this year. Unquestionably good fairways have been largely responsible for this addition. We have also had more guests, more extra green-fees. That's to be expected because when a foursome is making its plans to play, its choice of clubs will be the one with good fairways. As a result we have had over 5,000 guests this year, a very substantial increase over any previous year.

Fertilizer + Water = Fairways.

The question of how to establish good fairways and keep them in condition is more complicated. Every club has its own individual problems. We tried to answer some of our own problems when we built our new course 8 years ago. One of the things we did then was to put in a sprinkling system that would take care of the fairways as well as the greens. We spend about \$1,500 a year for watering. This includes electric current, labor and hose. The water is pumped from a river running through the course. There's no doubt in my mind that this sprinkling system has a big effect on the condition of our turf. If you haven't a sprinkling system for your fairways, I suggest that you plan for one now. It need not be an expensive system.



Superintendent Brockhausen (right) uses this motorcycle to transport him around Blue Mound's grounds.

Start it on three or four fairways. Then extend it each year. This is an excellent time to get it started because material costs are so low.

But there is one thing we have always believed and which our experience over a period of years proves to be true and that is—water alone won't keep fairways in condition. It will help. But you need a combination of water and fertilizer to get results—a thickening of the turf by promotion of new growth. Our sprinkling system is important because it helps us to get the most out of our fertilizer.

I can't understand why some golf clubs seem to think consistent fertilization of the fairways is an expense item. To me that is one of the most important items on my budget. You might just as well try to make bread without yeast as to try to produce good turf without fertilizer. Fertilizer is not only an important item but it is also a comparatively small item for us.

Of course, you have to use judgment in determining the kind of fertilizer you need. You can spend a lot of money without getting results, if you don't use the right fertilizer. We made some very careful tests and when we found what our soil needed we stuck to it. We avoid fertilizers that wash away or disintegrate too easily. I've seen some courses where they get a fine growth early in the spring but where they never need mowers after the first week or so in June. We have to keep our mowers going all the time because we get a good growth all through the summer. That's the result of what I call common sense, consistent fertilization. We feed our turf late in the fall. Some of this fertilizer lies dormant in the winter and gives the roots a good chance early in the spring before we could possibly do anything. Then a little later in the spring, we give the course another feeding of fertilizer. Our average cost for fertilizer has not been over \$300 a year for the past six years.

Regular Seeding Schedule.

Then there's one more thing. While consistent fertilization and proper sprinkling are responsible for the condition of the course generally, we also seed sections of the course regularly. We do this partly for insurance. Our cost for seed is not high and by having a regular program for seeding we keep the turf from "wearing out" in any one spot.

every course presents a different problem. The soil is different; drainage, climate, etc., all have a bearing on the question of turf culture. But the big things to remember in all cases is that you have to use seed to start a turf and after it is started it needs fertilizer and water. If you are not fortunate enough to have a good sprinkling system for your fairways then you'll have to depend on nature to furnish the water. But you can't ask nature to furnish the fertilizer, too. And right here you might be interested in an experiment we've been carrying on, on one small plot of ground. This plot has not been artificially watered. We've been letting nature furnish the water there. One section of it we have been feeding with fertilizer like we feed our course. Another section has not been fertilized. I wish you could see these two plots. Even the hot, dry summer we had this year couldn't kill the grass in the fertilized plot. The other one was brown and bare early in the summer.

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