

# Need Full Facts to Promote Use of Improved Equipment

By HERB GRAFFIS

**N**OT LONG AGO at a maintenance equipment demonstration conducted by the Midwest Greenkeepers Assn. I said to one of the association officials responsible for the affair that it looked like a pretty good thing.

"It's all O. K. as far as it goes," he replied, "but it is away short of what we need for the same sort of valuable research service to greenkeeping that is being supplied by the Green Section and other bodies on fertilizer, diseases and other turf factors.

"These demonstrations give us a chance to see the new equipment in operation for a brief time and are of value in allowing greenkeepers who are trained machinery experts to catch some new idea on the run, but seldom can I get enough out of them to help me make up my mind definitely on the desirability of buying any of the equipment I am seeing demonstrated for the first time."

We walked over and watched power greens mowers being demonstrated.

"Now here is a case that points out what I mean," said my friend. "All of these mowers are great improvements over the first power green mower I saw demonstrated and I will say from my own experience that any sound power green mower today is a major item in a maintenance economy campaign that has to maintain high standards of course condition.

"But would any greenkeeper here—or any chairman—rush back to his club and recommend the immediate purchase of a power green mower on the basis of this demonstration performance?"

## Tests Now Inconclusive

"Of course they wouldn't. There are many of these fellows whose courses should have power greens mowers, but not one of them will be pushed into action by this bare performance of cutting this practice green. What would help all concerned would be to have these demonstrations at the conclusion of actual working tests on golf courses with records of performance

in complete detail and observations of the working of the mowers also matters of record so the reports could be studied by greenkeepers prior to the final examination. Then we would be helping ourselves, our clubs and the manufacturers.

"As it is, our oversight or lack of organization in this respect is costing us considerable money; first, in the delay in adopting sound labor-aiding devices and secondly in delaying the perfection of the new ideas and adding to the manufacturers' development costs by not being prepared to submit helpful, scientific field reports on the performance of machines. Handling this is one of the big jobs the greenkeepers can do, but how they can do it, has me stopped!"

I made some notes on this chat, intending to talk over the subject with other greenkeepers.

A letter came in from C. C. Worthington recently which revived my interest in the matter discussed at the demonstration meeting. Mr. Worthington wrote:

"In reading the interesting and instructive articles to be found in your magazine, I am constantly surprised that so many writers, otherwise informed on the subject, seem to be unaware of the dominant position that the motor mowing of greens has acquired in bringing about reductions in the cost of golf course maintenance. These writers emphasize the importance, not to say the necessity, of keeping expenses today at the lowest point consistent with approved standards of upkeep. But this serves only to make it more difficult to understand why they omit including in their estimate of possible retrenchment what these machines can do to assist in their plans.

"It is of course well known that up to fairly recently reliance upon motor-driven machines for this green service would have been more or less of a risk, for those that were then being offered by a few manufacturers were shown in actual practice to be unsatisfactory.

## Progress Retarded by Fact Lack

"For a long time the opinion naturally prevailed in some quarters that motor

mowing for greens should be adopted with care and with some misgivings. This conservative attitude of many of the greenkeepers was to be expected in view of these failures and their efforts to maintain the high standard of greens that prevails today in so many of the clubs, should of course, be upheld to the utmost. But I am of the opinion that the time has arrived when this conservatism should not be imposed as a barrier to examination and test of the accomplishments which have in the past few years so wonderfully advanced the art.

"The time is ripe, it seems to me, for serious determination on the part of experts of exactly what these power machines will actually do and to what degree they may be relied upon by greenkeepers to meet whatever requirements are imposed. An authoritative and conclusive result could be easily reached in this way and the fact be definitely settled whether the claims made for these machines are based upon positive experience and demonstration, or upon hopes.

"In view of the immense savings resulting from their work, this removing of their status out of the realm of uncertainty and establishing it to the satisfaction of those endeavoring to economize, is something that all who are identified with golf course upkeep should, I think, wish to encourage.

"What time would be better than this, or what subject more important, if it be true that the time of any force employed on the greens and on similar work now depending upon hand mowing, may be reduced 40 or 60 per cent? What investigation could be conducted that would promise more in the direction of economy, or be of greater aid in the general advance of the golfing interests?

"The answer that has been made to this that the standard of upkeep would suffer by such a change, can no longer be made. The standard is improved. The actual mowing of the greens is as perfect as any done by hand. The auxiliary work of rolling, spiking and topdressing, together with the approaches, sweeping, and raking, is all done better by the power element and in a fraction of the time it takes to do it by hand.

"It is only because the standard of upkeep will be improved that the manufacturers of this class of machinery are willing to back the success of the installation and it is only because I feel that the saving in time brought about by the advent of this improved practice is so large and timely, and the best standards so conserved, that I venture to make this suggestion and to ask you, on what grounds these machines accomplishing so much in this major department of golf course expense, should appear to be

slighted or ignored in the writings of many who in other respects doubtless keep abreast of the times?"

### What's to Prevent Testing?

From time to time this matter of testing equipment has been presented to GOLFDOM by manufacturers and we have pointed out that our position is such that we could not properly fit into any testing and endorsement operation in connection with devices having such widely varying conditions of operation. Approval or absence of approval would be suspected, probably, as being somewhat dependent on advertising in GOLFDOM and we wouldn't want to lay ourselves open to any jam of this kind.

A tentative basis for appraising fairway mowers was suggested a couple of years ago by Prof. Dickinson, but got nowhere as several major points were pronounced simply matters of opinion which had no bearing on the performance of the mowers in actual service under certain conditions.

When power green mowing was new reference was made to one of the devices in the Green Section *Bulletin*, whereupon there was complaint registered by other manufacturers that inasmuch as no reference had been made by the *Bulletin* to their new devices, it might be considered discrimination or at least injudicious to give publicity to any one manufacturer's equipment.

By the above citations you will see that it is impractical for GOLFDOM, the Green Section or state agricultural schools with greenkeeping departments to pass on equipment performance. Consequently, if the greenkeepers and manufacturers think that the matter could be handled in a way to do some mutual good, it's up to the manufacturers and greenkeepers associations to work out something.

Progress has been made in determining the proper seeding, fertilizing, watering and disease treating methods to employ under given conditions. It may be possible to extend in value the pioneer work done in scientific testing of maintenance machinery performance.

**HENRY COMSTOCK**, general chairman of the Buffalo Junior Chamber of Commerce PGA championship committee, was for two years. He served one term as president of the Intercollegiate GA of America. He won the Western New York amateur golf championship in 1923-25-29.