Spike Discs Grow Increasingly Popular as Maintenance Aid

SPIKE discs have become standard equipment at so many well-maintained golf courses in such a comparatively short space of time that some authorities doubt this item has been given the publicity it deserves as a life-saver for many greens. These practical men point out that in numerous cases the character and speed of spike discing treatment would be a godsend to clubs that have overlooked the present place of the device as a staple in the inventory of course maintenance equipment.

A. L. Brandon, sec. of the Greenkeeping Supts. Assn., and supt. of the St. Charles (Ill.) CC, considers the spike disc highly valuable in the production and maintenance of fine turf, and observes that it is in service at almost all courses where turf is of a superior grade. Of the spike disc he says:

Its purposes can be compared somewhat to those of a cultivator in farm practice. A golf course superintendent is not able to practice crop rotation, but frequent use of the spiker with its many piercing operations will result in loosening the soil, making for greater porosity and better results from fertilization and chemical treatments.

Packed Soil Loosened

Spikers most frequent use is that of overcoming compacted soil conditions. This condition is commonly caused by faulty construction of the green areas, or by traffic of players over the green when wet. Packed soil conditions result in shallow root growth which not only produces a thin turf, but lowers plant vitality and resistance to turf ailments.

Thorough spiking of a green prior to top-dressing permits the materials to work into the grass roots, improving soil texture and creating greater resiliency of the turf. He also provides uniform porosity of the soil, allowing rain and sprinkling to penetrate, which lessens watering costs to a great extent.

During dry periods, much injury of the turf results through the drying out of the surface soil in irregular patches on the exposed parts of the green. Spiking enables the water to penetrate more rapidly and will aid in the recovery of these dry areas. It is usually necessary to hand-water these areas to insure a thorough saturation of the soil, which can be tested by taking a test plug from the area.

Seaside bent greens and Bermuda fairways of the Oakhurst CC, Tulsa, are being groomed for the Women's Trans-Mississippi championship, scheduled for the week of June 6. View above is of the 13th hole of the layout.

A well-known turf authority has also recommended spike-discing in breaking up scum formation resulting from sun-scald. It is generally recognized that a waterlogged soil is the basic cause of sun-scald. Spiking will increase soil evaporation and becomes the first step in recovery treatment.

Spiking is of value in seeding operation, particularly where you wish to introduce a finer strain of bent in the putting area. Excellent results have been reported by light spiking, followed by seeding and a light top-dressing. This method is particularly advantageous to clubs whose budget does not allow resodding, or where the membership will not tolerate a green out of play.

In consideration of the great improvement in maintenance standards and equipment within the last decade, and with still greater demands from the golfer for better playing conditions, it is probable that spiking operations will be extended to fairway practice.

How's Help's Housing?—Again may we advise attention to the employees' quarters before the season gets into full swing. Furnishing, heating, cooling, ventilation, eating places, and bathing and toilet facilities at some very proud clubs are so awful that if members ever got the true picture there would be hell to pay.

The buck would be passed to the manager, of course, so the manager had better protect himself by an inspection with his officials, now, and by recommendations in writing.