

TURF UNHURT BY WINTER SPORTS

By JOHN MONTEITH, Jr.

AT THIS season when golf on northern courses is played by the hardy but small minority the club is likely to be pretty well abandoned. In many cases it has been found that a program of winter sports encourages interest among the members who belong to the warm-weather-golfer class as well as among the children of the club members. Such activities, in addition to keeping alive the member interest, also provide some work for at least part of the greenkeeping staff during the time when they would otherwise most likely remain unemployed.

While many clubs make the utmost use of their natural facilities for the development of a winter sports program, there are many more clubs which might develop such a program to a decided advantage. The recent increase of interest in skiing and skating would seem to justify a careful rechecking by club officials of the facilities at their course for such winter use of the club property. In too many cases

a quick decision is made on this question on the grounds that too much permanent damage would be done to turf. Experience has shown that this is not the case. On the contrary, more damage to golf course turf may be done by indiscriminate skiing than is likely to occur as a result of a much more extensive use of the course for this purpose where a definite program is sponsored with some supervision or guidance.

In the case of skating rinks there is usually a feeling among club officials that a sheet of ice will kill turf and that any ideas of a skating rink on a turfed area should therefore be squelched as soon as possible.

Actually grass is seldom injured merely by a cover of ice. The injury on low areas that are so generally associated with ice sheets is usually caused by standing water rather than by ice sheets. It may also be caused by the development of one of the disease-producing fungi which are encouraged by water. Such injuries in most cases would develop on those areas even without a coating of ice.

Where clubs have lakes or ponds or suitable areas not in turf that may be dammed readily and made into winter ponds the problem of providing a skating



Greens crew clearing snow from rink of Charles River CC (Mass.) Note toboggan slide in background.



"The Lake Placid of New Jersey" is what many newspapermen have come to call the Crestmont GC, West Orange, N. J., because this club keeps its name on the sport pages, winter as well as summer.

The toboggan slide pictured above is now being used for the fourth straight winter, and green-chairman John F. Nolan credits the slide for doing more than any other one thing to keep members and their children enthused about the club throughout the year.

The slide is made of wood, is 1,000 ft. in length and 35 in. wide. At times toboggans on the slide attain the speed of 50 miles per hour. Nolan thinks the toboggan slide idea is something other clubs should adopt to maintain year-round club interest and points out that most courses are on the hilly side anyway, so that it would be little trouble or expense to install.

Ice skating is also featured at Crestmont. The club floods the water pond along the 8th fairway each winter so that it extends over two acres. Crestmont's genial greenkeeper, Bill Riley, who contributes a lot each year to make the club's winter sports program a big success, and who was once a figure skating champion, adds to the fun of the skaters by giving members and their children skating lessons.

rink does not involve any question of protecting the interests of the golf player. In such cases preparation for ice is simply one of seeing that leaves or refuse or any aquatic vegetation near the surface be removed before the ice forms. They weaken the ice especially near the edges and may cause some troublesome holes due to absorbing sunlight and melting the ice in their immediate vicinity during the warmer periods of winter. Where not already provided for, it is well to make some arrangements for the maintenance of such ponds at approximately the same level during the winter.

Where ponds are not available it is possible to provide good skating rinks by

spraying water on any reasonably flat area. If this area is in turf provision should be made for good surface drainage before the ground is frozen. With such precautions the excessive water in the spring or during extended thaws will rapidly drain away without causing any permanent injury to the turf. Barriers to retain water should be of a temporary nature, such as boards or mounds of packed wet snow.

The snowmold and related fungi thrive on turf that is covered and kept wet. Therefore the diseases caused by these fungi are apt to develop under a skating rink during the warmer periods of winter. As a precaution against such disease attacks it is well to avoid any late summer or fall fertilization of turf on which skating rinks are to be built. It is also well to apply corrosive sublimate or calomel at the rate of 3 or 4 ounces to the thousand square feet. It may be applied in sand or screened topdressing, scattered evenly over the area just before starting to build up the ice sheet. Even this precaution may well be neglected on a well-drained area where the turf is composed of the more disease-resistant types of grasses which have not been over-fertilized. Some light injury can usually be taken care of satisfactorily by spring seeding.

Flood Rink After Ground Is Frozen

Before starting to make a skating rink on turf it is best to wait until the ground is well frozen. This not only is a distinct advantage from the standpoint of making good ice, without the troublesome air pockets or shell ice, but also protects the turf by completely checking any growth activities. It essentially puts the turf into "cold storage" where growth is at a standstill. Grass may actually continue some growth processes under the layer of water even though the water may be covered with a fairly heavy sheet of ice.

When the ground is well frozen the layer of ice may be built up gradually by frequent spraying. Each successive layer should be thin enough to assure rapid freezing to prevent any run-off which would result in "shell ice." Every effort should be made to keep the ice free from leaves, cigarette butts, pieces of stick or other dark objects since they absorb light from the sun and "burn" holes through the ice.

On most courses with skating rinks



At the Charles River CC, Newton Centre, Mass., this rink attracts large winter patronage. Cabin is warming house for shelter and dressing.

there are provisions for hockey, which unquestionably should be encouraged. An "all purpose" rink however is about as worthless as most "all purpose" things. Hockey and general skating do not mix on a small rink. Wherever facilities are not available for separate rinks some provision should be made for special times for each.

Allot Rink for Figure Skaters

With the increased interest in the fascinating sport of figure skating there may be enough interested members to justify setting aside a section of the rink or some special hours for figure skating. To a figure skater, a group of hockey players are about as unwelcome as a big caterpillar tractor operating at the edge of a green is to a golfer. Figure skating, like good putting, requires good surfaces for its successful execution. Therefore figure skaters, like good putters, are likely to be the most critical (not just knockers) of the surface provided. They likewise are likely to be the most appreciative group when any efforts are made to provide satisfactory conditions for them.

A skating rink to continue to attract skaters must be kept in good condition. Cracks or those mysterious "warts" or "blisters" that develop on rinks are to skaters what worm casts and brownpatch on putting greens are to the golfers. Unless remedied by filling, planing, spraying or other means the skating season will prove to be a short and unpleasant one.

Where the course is hilly and suitable for skiing or tobogganing these sports should be encouraged. Little if any damage is done to turf by these sports. The injury that does occur is invariably done when there are bare areas over which

someone has gone when the surface soil is thawed. If the bare areas on the principal sliding areas are covered with snow occasionally, such injury can be avoided. With some urging from fellow skiers the careless individual who will shuffle across a soft piece of exposed turf can no doubt be persuaded to change his habits. The occasional damage to turf by such individuals should not close the course to other enthusiasts, for after all such an individual is perhaps the same one who chops a piece of turf out of a putting green by slamming down his club when he misses a putt.

In most cases skiing results in more damage to young trees and shrubbery than to turf on a golf course. Near the principal skiing areas any low trees and shrubs that may be largely covered with snow should be clearly marked as far as possible.

Late Winter Bird Care—See that you provide late winter food needs of birds if you want lots of help in insect control next season. Also see that the birds are supplied with water; they need it daily.

Feeding stations to be effective must be easy for the birds to get at; not situated some place that just happens to be convenient to you. Locate feeding places near the birds' shelter.

It's important, too, that birds have sand and gravel during the winter.

Protect the birds against cats, dogs and thoughtless hunters.

Toward the end of winter see that plenty of bird nesting material is available around your course. Boxes containing pieces of string and yarn, feathers, broken straw and with some mud available, will attract birds to nest-building.