

ASKS Turf Research PLAN

**Purdue Greenkeepers Meeting Wants
USGA to Coordinate State Work.**

By HERB GRAFFIS

★ AT THE SIXTH annual greenkeepers short course field at Purdue university, West Lafayette, Ind., Feb. 28-29, 50 greenkeepers, mainly from Indiana and Illinois, voted to recommend to the Green Section committee of the USGA nation-wide coordination of greenkeeping research.

In this proposal to link together the resources of state agricultural colleges, experiment stations and extension services, the greenkeepers, since the Purdue meeting have been advised they have the approval of the Chicago District Golf Assn. and the Indiana Golf Assn.

Thus began what probably will be the pattern of remaining wartime and post-war activities of the Green Section whose few remaining staff members have been doing their very able and overworked best despite reductions in research facilities and budget and urgent demands for wartime help.

Other regional greenkeeper and golf club organizations are expected to express their endorsement of the recommendation made at the Purdue meeting. From expressions made, even before the war, by various state agricultural college experiment stations and extension services, these organizations are agreeable to the plan, as the turf maintenance problems brought before them have disclosed advisability of closer relationship between the turf work being done at and by state establishments and personnel and the most effective employment of certain state specialists on golf turf special problems.

This latest sign of further extension in Green Section work shows the tremendous advance made since 1906 when Dr. Walter S. Harban of Washington, who helped organize the Columbia and Burning Tree Country clubs, went to the Department of Agriculture at Washington for help in trying to get American golf course turf up to the standard of British golf turf which grew under much more favorable climatic conditions. Dr. Harban didn't get very far at that time but persisted and received some help in 1915 when the Ex-

ecutive committee of the USGA asked the then Secretary of Agriculture, David S. Houston, to provide departmental help in solving the problems of the golf courses' \$10,000,000 annual maintenance bill, half of which, the USGA committee estimated, was wasted.

As the result of that visit a turf experimental station was established at Arlington, Va., where it was maintained until a few years ago when building operations made its transfer necessary.

In 1920 the Green Section committee was established by the USGA and in 1921 the Bulletin of the Green Section was started. Dr. C. V. Piper of the Department of Agriculture was made secretary of the committee. The close relationship of Green Section technical service and the Department of Agriculture continued after Dr. Piper's death when Dr. R. A. Oakley became chairman. Later Dr. John Monteith, jr., now with the Army Engineer Corps became chief of the Green Section's technical staff and has figured prominently in the great development of scientific greenkeeping.

During the past decade it has been generally admitted that the multitude and complexity of golf course maintenance problems and conditions put definite limitations on the work that could be accomplished under weather conditions in the Washington, D. C., area; hence, under Monteith's direction test plots were established at golf clubs in various sections of the country.

However it soon was found that limitations of time, trained research personnel and money sharply restricted the potential practical value of these installations and for the most part they have been abandoned.

Directly as the result of the Green Section's activity and the consequent improvement of golf course turf extensive interest was created among those having to do with lawn, park, playfield and cemetery turf. That brought the state agricultural research facilities into the problem

and into close association with the greenkeepers who had successfully pioneered in the practical solution of many turf troubles.

Early in this period of association came the greenkeeper short courses, a very valuable element in the business operation of American golf and undeniably responsible for saving American golfers millions of dollars, while improving playing conditions.

Authorities of the state enterprises found in the eagerly receptive attitude of greenkeepers great encouragement in working at agricultural problems of an often peculiar character. The alliance between the research and extension men and the college professors with the greenkeepers built up the situation which now requires knitting together under USGA planning, according to the Purdue meeting's recommendation and, so far as we have been able to learn, the general conviction of greenkeepers, green chairmen and state agricultural activities connected in some way with golf turf maintenance problems.

The Purdue greenkeeping short course exhibits typical rapid development of greenkeepers. The first short course at Purdue was conducted seven years ago after one of the school's athletic departments brought back from Massachusetts State college enthusiastic reports of what was being done by the greenkeeping educational work conducted by Prof. L. S. Dickinson. After consultation with the Midwest and Indiana greenkeepers' organization officials, M. L. Clevert, director of intramural athletics at Purdue, organized the first of the annual two-day greenkeeping sessions. The late Prof. G. A. Young of Purdue, an official of the Indiana and Indiana Seniors associations, was active in the enterprise.

Between the first of the Purdue short courses and the sixth short course are significant differences. The first course had a program of papers read by various authorities in greenkeeping and members of the Purdue faculty. The discussions following reading of the papers were brief because of the greenkeepers' lack of experience in speaking before groups, and probably because of their lack of confidence in controversy with the scientists. The first of Purdue's courses was held March 22-23, 1938. The attendance was slightly lower than this year's short course.

Purdue missed one year in holding its courses but found that greenkeepers with their wartime maintenance problems regarded the two-day conference as a "must."

At the Purdue session, as at other short courses, the majority of greenkeepers pay their own expenses to get answers to their clubs' problems. Why that should be long has puzzled GOLFDOM's editor. He has

attended many conventions in various fields and has seen no other meetings in golf, and only conventions of scientific bodies, having the serious attitude of greenkeepers' short courses. The short course expense item is logically one of the essentials of a club's maintenance budget. For the green-chairman to allow the greenkeeper to assume that expense as a personal item is acknowledgment of the chairman's lack of knowledge of a very valuable factor in course maintenance, or an oversight.

This year the Purdue sessions were entirely round-table affairs with authorities leading off in various topics.

Purdue provided four of the leaders, Dr. George D. Scarseth on soils and fertilizers, Prof. G. O. Mott on grasses and fairways, Prof. Glen Lehker on insect pests and Prof. O. C. Lee on weeds. O. J. Noer of the Milwaukee Sewerage commission showed instructive colored views of turf problems and their solutions in beginning the session on general turf problems. A. L. Brandon, widely known greenkeeper who has been in Army airfield work for the past two years, talked on problems common to golf course and airfield maintenance. Ken Welton, formerly of the USGA Green section, and now chief of Indiana soil conservation work, also was a highly informative contributor to the round table discussions.

No longer is there stage-fright of the greenkeepers. Their advance in science of greenkeeping has made the round-table sessions rich in expert diagnosis and recommendation from a full presentation of facts. Dr. George Scarseth of Purdue, who has been on the program of all Purdue short courses, says that the development of the greenkeepers' present qualifications has been exceedingly helpful to the research scientists in advising accurately of conditions and results, and in helping to determine what college work can be done to be of most direct dollar-and-cents value to golf course maintenance.

O. J. Noer who covers more golf courses and sits in on more greenkeepers' conferences than any other man in the country says that the greenkeepers' progress in the practical application of agricultural science has been phenomenal. Noer's statement must be accepted as authoritative as he is conversant with developments in all fields using fertilizer. Noer recently has been appointed to the USGA Green Section committee.

One of the subjects discussed was spring cutting lengths. Prof. Mott called attention to the necessity of grass getting enough early length to keep from unduly drawing on soil fertility in the spring. This stirred considerable discussion on mowing equipment design and on cutting

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length suitable for golfing results. The grass round table also brought out reference by Mott and others on work being done to develop a good golf fairway grass that wouldn't grow tall.

The Brandon talk on golf course and airfield kindred problems and what airfield work had been done in soils, drainage, fertilizing, grass strains and mowing was especially interesting to the greenkeepers. Carl Bretzlaff, of Stout Field, Indianapolis, former president of the Indiana Greenkeepers' assn. and one of the prime movers in establishing the Purdue short course, was among those participating in the discussion.

Considerably due to turf practice developed on golf courses, U. S. Army and Navy aviation has been able to make valuable use of turf in quick and sound construction of plane runways, elimination of dust that causes accidents, reduces motor life and lowers morale and health of fliers, developing camouflage, and even in combatting the malaria problem.

At Purdue this year there were 18 greenkeepers from the Chicago district among the 50 in attendance. They and

other greenkeepers representing mid-western courses of all classes expect the troubles of 1944 course maintenance will be tougher than the problems of 1943 since labor and machinery problems will be more acute. Several greenkeepers remarked that their clubs had done exceptionally well financially in 1943 and had begun to put money aside for course rehabilitation work that would be necessary after the war. It was noted that since seed, fertilizer and arsenicals now are available the unexpectedly healthy finances of clubs might wisely take into consideration turf improvement as part of this year's program.

Noer commented that during his travels from mid-summer 1943 on there had been a marked increase in trouble with apparently new manifestations of turf diseases.

VICTORY OPEN TO EDGEWATER

The Chicago District Golf association has announced that Edgewater Golf Club, Ridge and Pratt Ave., Chicago, will be host to the 1944 Victory Open championship, June 28 through July 2.

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