

Lesson in Wartime Upkeep

By ANDY HIGH

TWO seasons of war-condition upkeep have taught that it is possible to bypass many of the operating difficulties resulting from shortages in course maintenance, labor, machinery and supplies.

The more alert greenkeepers have developed resourcefulness in licking most of the problems of wartime upkeep and the lessons they have learned will stand them in good stead and benefit their clubs for years to come.

The greens are the great labor, machine and materials problems of these extraordinary times. Fairway maintenance problems have been solved for the time being with less frequent cutting, narrowing and shortening. Golfers, for their part, in many cases have offset lower standards of fairway maintenance by exercising winter fairway rules the year 'round. True, but, on the other hand, many clubs have found it necessary to lower the height of their rough cutting to help meet the acute golf ball shortage. Shrubbery and trees have remained untrimmed, fences and bridges have been neglected as well as many other details that received constant attention during normal times. Yet, I have heard but little complaining in this direction.

But throughout, the golfer has retained his right to expect good greens and raise hell in general about poor greens.

For the past two seasons I have, through the gracious transient system of the Army, played courses in Missouri, Illinois, Nebraska, and Kansas (and these the finer metropolitan courses) and in each found the common problem—the greens, the common complaint—the greens—and the common stock excuse—shortages due to war conditions.

For the future benefit of courses that have been unable to meet this problem I wish to cite the procedure of care of greens on the White Lakes GC., Topeka, Kansas. This club has had for the whole season greens equal to the average peacetime greens. The total labor force for the season has been one man, the owner Mr. E. E. Brunkow, and the occasional help of two boys.

Most important, whereas many greens throughout this area have suffered, the greens of White Lakes were as lovely in late October as they were in June.

The first step, starting with the first mowing, was a systematic reduction of the size of the greens. This was not

a great reduction for the sum total reduction would not constitute the footage of one average sized green. But for a whole season just a lap or two less on each of the eighteen holes is no small item in manpower and economy. This reduction served another purpose—that of transplanting. This procedure eliminated the need of a seed bed and eliminated transportation of mat from a seed bed to far corners of the course. This saved time and actually provided a seed bed at the edge of each green. For the golfers it provided the finest type of fringe.

For the later part of March and through April the greens were cut high and only every other cutting was caught. This permitted the development of an extensive mat and some retention of the minerals lost in clippings. From April on the mowers were lowered just enough to clip the accumulated fringiness. The greens in late October were uniformly matted, without semblance of spottiness, and with a mat of from three-fourths to one inch in depth.

Over the eight month period fertilizer was applied four times in commercial form; treatment for brownpatch normal; watering normal; no presence of dollar-spot, fungus, or burn, no worm casts, no grub mounds, no mower scarring, and top-dressing was not used.

The greens were, however, not without fault. High slopes had to be watered heavier due to run off, but this was more than offset, due to the retention of moisture for longer periods. Bend was the real aggravator. It was not possible to keep the grass from bending with the contour. It did not make for an aggravated putting condition comparable to the inconsistencies found on many greens through out the Midwest area.

The turf tended to catch only the pitch that had enough downward force to tear. A low pitch tended to kick out the backspin—but still nothing like burned or spotted greens as the mat still tended to exert drag on a running ball.

The most striking feature was that for eight straight months every green and the fringe extending to the bluegrass was "entirely" devoid of crabgrass.

KEEP AFTER USED BALLS
