

Playing Technique Aid To Greenkeeper

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There are more old time greenkeepers than modern ones who scoff at the idea of a greenkeeper working on his game and spending enough time on it to become an expert or at least a good golfer. My advice to a young greenkeeper would be to spend a lot of time on improving his game as much as he can and on developing a keen playing and technical knowledge of golf. Pros have stepped out and taken over greenkeepers jobs along with their own business at some clubs. I think it would be a healthy situation if the reverse were true and it certainly would be a tremendous boon to many moderate-sized and smaller clubs.

To begin with a greenkeeper who can play a respectable game meets his chairman and members in the game that had created his job.

The member's game comes first regardless what a greenkeeper may think of his course. So when you see golf from your member's viewpoint you are bound to have a more realistic viewpoint of greenkeeping.

Your viewpoint on length of grass—speed of greens, etc., will broaden and be completely authoritative if you do on the course what it originally was made for—playing, not maintenance.

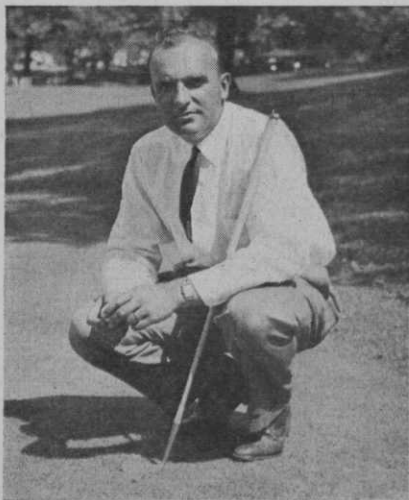
If Byron Nelson were a greenkeeper members of his club would take for granted for example, that grass a certain length on greens would serve the best interest of golf and the course.

Playing and Maintenance Viewpoint

Let's play a round, starting from the teeing area. Very often a greenkeeper who thinks only of the course is apt to keep his tees too long—and golfers love short clipped tees—regardless of what greenkeepers like for their own interest and turf safety. The golfing greenkeeper can also appreciate the position of the markers as to prevailing winds and the character of the hole. By setting the markers he can make the hole vary in interest and make it difficult or easy.

If, before he hits, he wants to wash his ball he may know whether he likes the smell of his ball washer soap.

The length of rough if you happen to slice or hook is a matter of personal dif-



Emil Mashie, greenkeeper who gives tournament pros some tough competition.

ferences these days—one man wants to use a brassie; the other will take his penalty. But a fair rough in most instances is one that will allow one to hit half the distance that he normally would from the fairway.

The fairway length will be very obvious to all who are good enough to be in it. The golfer who uses a wood on average holes (strange as it seems) doesn't mind long grass as much as a crack golfer who hits a crisp iron. As a matter of fact a ball sits higher with longer grass even though there may be grass around the ball.

Playing to the green if the playing greenkeeper happens to hit his shot short he will soon find out if he has not watered sufficiently in front of the greens or overwatered and made it soggy. Whether he is over or short on his approaches will very often answer that question that is highly important in satisfactory maintenance. The greenkeeper may be six inches off the green and have to use an eight iron. Then he might learn that a little more mowing would make a more enjoyable shot. Or on a slope away from the edge of the green his ball might roll on the green and slowly trickle off into a trap. Then he might learn that he needs a little more grass in



Approach to 365 yard sixth hole at finely groomed and famed old Onwentsia course where Mashie is greenkeeper.

that area. When he gets on a green the nap, if any (and there is plenty of it around), and speed will be very obvious to one who has interest in putting the little white pill in the hole.

Greens Speed Problem

Greens to me personally on the whole are too slow, and, I think I can safely say that is the thought of many golfers. Too much grass would be the greenkeepers viewpoint of the situation but to a golfer it would only mean that the greens are too slow. At this point I will say the mower manufacturers can help to solve the greens speed problem for the greenkeeper and the golfers. The greenkeeper in some instances might go light on fertilizer in arriving at a satisfying greens' speed.

We have probably played several uneventful holes, and lets say on the ninth hole a ball was hit on a line into a fairway trap and buries out of sight. No one need deny that too much sand on the bank has made an unplayable lie. On another trap a ball skids through the trap and rolls and rolls—the trap means nothing—no lip or grass at the top cancels the error on the hit.

A greenkeeper can probably see as much or more for all I know while not playing but when it costs him strokes or a few dollars in a game he gets his members' sharply personalized judgment of his work.

Always uppermost in a greenkeeper's work should be the effect of maintenance practices on play, tempered with ultimate health and good condition of the course.

There are many things that can be ob-

served better and appreciated more by playing. One of the most important is the placing of the holes, cutting sharp edges, and frequency of changes on cups.

There is nothing more monotonous to a member than to play the hole at the same location for several days. It's uninteresting to say the least. Varying the character of a hole by placing the hole while keeping in mind the location of tee markers is something that can be done very artistically with golf knowledge. It tends to break the monotony of playing the same course.

I was just a kid when I started greenkeeping in 1930, and an 85 shooter. Five years later I broke 70 for the first time and the course I was taking care of was improved, so I can't see why some can say that a golf course's need must be neglected while the greenkeeper is improving his own game.

Today, 18 years later, I hold four course records, but greenkeeping to me is still as tough as breaking course records, if not tougher much of the time.

I have noticed that when the members and the green chairman know their greenkeeper plays golf, and maybe good golf, there is less crabbing and kicking about certain conditions on the course. They know a golfer recognizes and appraises the same conditions under which they play.

When a greenkeeper dresses and looks like a golfer and is seen out there shooting pars with members, his stock goes up. He gets in a better position to hear a lot of

thoughts around the club that will help him do his work better and cooperate more effectively with his fellow workers, the pro and manager.

May I predict that in the future you will see better golfers among the greenkeepers. Friends who were ex-caddies—as most pros are—also are fellows who can take an interest in growing grass as careers.

I have been around clubs nearly all my life. I caddied at Bretton Woods, N. H., for such fellows as Francis Ouimet, Mike Brady, Walter Hagen, Gene Sarazen; worked on greens as a laborer; played part of the tournament schedule as a pro golfer. As I see and understand greenkeeping it is not glorified as it should be. It is a lot of hard work and not often appreciated.

The way a greenkeeper can help get himself and his job appreciated would seem to me to be by playing at least a pretty good game. Course maintenance is to my mind a task of great responsibility at a club. And without minimizing the qualifications, the diligence and the achievements of my very good and capable friends who head other departments of club operation I will say that the expert greenkeeper must have knowledge of even broader scope, working hours that often are longer than the lengthy day of the manager, but despite these demands of his job the greenkeeper is in many cases the department head the members think of only at rare intervals.

SEVEN CHAMPIONS IN MAY'S INTERNATIONAL MATCH

The 1947 International Golf Match, to be held at the Tam O'Shanter CC, Chicago, Saturday and Sunday, September 27th and 28th. In case of a tie, an 18-hole play-off will be held on Monday, September 29th.

The stakes are the International championship, the world's largest golf trophy (International Cup), and \$5,000 in cash, which honors and prizes will be awarded the first-place winner.

Players will be: Sam Snead, 1946 International champion; Bobby Locke, 1947 South African champion and 1947 Canadian Open champion; Ben Hogan; Jim Ferrier, 1947 PGA champion; Lew Worsham, 1947 U.S. National Open champion; Jimmy Demaret, 1947 Masters Tournament champion, and Lloyd Mangrum, 1947 South American champion and John Palmer, 1947 Western Open champion.

Fred Daly, British Open champion, also was invited to play.

Last year, first time this event was played, it was won by Sam Snead, 1946 British Open champion. Should the International Cup be won three times in succession by the same contestant, it then becomes the permanent possession of the winner.

Each player in this International event will receive \$2,000.00 expense money.



Locke putts out on 18th in winning play-off of All-American (plus Locke) tournament from Oliver at Tam O'Shanter, Chicago, where International championship will be played Sept. 27-28. Water tower in background is 85 ft. high. Permanent grandstand includes broadcasting facilities and George S. May's "Royal box." Note sanding of turf in foreground by Tam's able greenkeeper Ray Didier. It is protected against undue turf damage by heavy traffic.