

Clean Course of Leaves to Extend Play and Profits

By REX McMORRIS

"Imagine, driving down the middle of the fairway and losing not one but three balls in one afternoon. It's bad enough to lose one when it goes into the woods, but to have to walk off and leave three when you know they are lying out there on the fairway covered up by those leaves is too much," ranted Jim Williamson as he gave vent to his feelings in the locker room of one of Chicago district's golf clubs following a tournament event and outing of the Chicago Junior Association of Commerce one mid-September afternoon. And he was soon joined by others who had suffered the same experience.

The occasion was one of those annual affairs where a hundred to two-hundred of the boys take the afternoon and evening off to disport themselves as can only be done at a stag affair. Unfortunately the above incident and similar experiences by others had dampened the enthusiasm of some of the group to the extent they were all for moving the following year's outing to another club or holding it earlier in the year. Holding it earlier this

particular year had been out of the question since the course was well patronized during the playing season and the financial burden of reserving the entire club and its facilities for the one group at an earlier date had been voted down.

Innumerable prizes were given away for the golf event and some of the boys felt they had been cheated out of possible winnings. Extra strokes added to their scores because of lost balls which they felt was through no fault of their own left several of them disgruntled to put it mildly.

There are those who would say it was too late in the season to stage a golf tournament if the fairways were covered with leaves to such an extent even though it was one of those balmy fall days as can only be experienced in September's bright weather—an ideal day for golf. One had only to travel a few miles to play on one or more courses having little or no leaf maintenance problems that were still able to maintain a semblance of normal play. The point is the headache the boys were



Greenkeepers and park officials watch demonstration of the "Speedy" Power-Vac Rakeland arranged by the Deephouse Equip. Co., Berlin, Conn., on park area in Bristol, Conn. during fall of 1947. Photo shows turf area free of leaves after machine has picked up, pulverized and disposed of particles after passing over area of heavy accumulation as shown at right.



1947 Field demonstration of the 45" Parker Fairway Sweeper shows bales of leaves which have been swept up by one-man operation at the rate of 500 bushels per hour. The sweeper collects the leaves in bales holding approximately 25 bushels which are easily transferred by truck to compost pile or disposal area.

confronted with presents rather forcefully a problem with which club owners, managers and professionals should give due consideration, namely, adequate course maintenance for proper playing conditions.

Has it been taken for granted by too many club officials especially in the northern half of the country that the golf playing season is over when the leaves begin to fall or does the fault lie in the lack of effort put forth in extending the playing season? Elsewhere in this issue considerable space is devoted to ways and means of lengthening the season of play and maintaining a profitable business operation for both club and pro shop for a longer period. If this is to be, some thought must be given to the effect Jack Frost has on course playing conditions and less taken for granted. Too much expended effort in cultivating members and patrons to the advantages of an extended playing season can well go for naught without open fairways and well-kept greens.

Does play fall off automatically because it is a certain time of year, because there is a certain feel in the air, because other interests interfere? Or, is

it because falling leaves have signalled the approach of the end of another season? Can it be that the leaf hazard creates too great a handicap for the average golfer to overcome? Have too many experienced the difficulty Jim Williamson had or are there other intangible factors that actually cut down the interest and enthusiasm for the game which with the proper incentive and a little education might be overcome. There is evidence that leaves may be a greater controlling factor in cutting off play in the early fall months than many will care to admit. Many more rounds of golf might otherwise have been played if someone hadn't said, "Aw, there are too many leaves on the course."

Ideal weather prevailed until late in the fall of 1947 and courses on which greens were swept regularly and fairways were kept open enough golf was played to offset the late spring when rains kept golfers off courses for as much as sixty days of ordinarily good golf weather. One prime example stands out—a north side club in one of Chicago's suburban cities had a full course of play on a late October weekend day even though a bigtime football game was underway not too far distant and there were several fans on the course that day anxious to keep up with the football scores but more anxious to take advantage of the open fairways.

There are many instances which attest to the fact that golf play can be maintained for a longer period than is presently experienced by the majority of courses and in the main one will find the amount of play on those courses is related directly to the tidy playing condition in which they are kept. Pros, owners and managers genuinely interested in extending the playing season will be conscientiously concerned about extending the playing season. If leaves are a headache to those who play, then they are just as much a headache to those who want the pay and it is up to those who want the pay to



The Parker 3-Gang Trailer Sweeper used in this Sacramento, Calif. demonstration sweeps a 100 inch swath and collects a capacity load of 36 bu. about every 12 to 15 minutes or 150 to 200 bushels per hour.

make it pleasant for those who want to play. This may be a play on words but there is a lot more truth in it than there is poetry.

Course maintenance equipment manufacturers have been experimenting and doing considerable research for a number of years on machinery which will efficiently clean lawns, fairways and greens of leaves, twigs and loose particles. As a result of these experiments and the



Leaves disappear at the rate of 10 to 15 acres per day on this Minneapolis turf area as the 48" Ronco Leafmill picks up leaves, twigs and loose particles. Rotating blades chop and crush collection into fine particles and pass them out through perforated screen to settle with little or no trace on the grass.

research which has gone into the work there are on the market today several different types of equipment which will enable the greenkeeper to do a better, quicker job of keeping greens clean and fairways open. If leaves have been a headache to golfers it is a forgone conclusion they have been a greater one to those men who have been wrestling with the problem of making a piece of equipment that will get the leaves off the ground and dispose of them in such a way there will be little or no trace left.

Leaves long have been a major problem to park officials and cemetery caretakers as well as golf course superintendents and the matter of solving their leaf disposal problems has had considerable bearing on the recent developments which have been made. Not all areas, of course, are maintained alike. It is for that reason, coupled with the ingenuity of the manufacturers, that equipment has been made to dispose of leaves in about any way desired.

There are single unit power sweepers available for small areas and gang trailer sweepers with tractor attachment to cover eight to nine foot swaths for larger areas. This type of sweeper is equipped with a large hopper for collecting leaves

and debris and by efficient handling can clean up at the rate of 150 to 200 bushels per hour.

A newer development is a sweeper designed solely for fairway use. The unit is built to sweep up and collect into bales of 25 bushels as much as 500 bushels per hour. This equipment permits easy transfer of bales by truck so leaves may be made into compost or utilized as needed later.

A different type unit has been perfected that makes it possible for one operator to clear from 10 to 15 acres per day. A tractor unit furnishes the power and propels the unit along the course at a speed of two to four miles per hour. Leaves are picked up and passed upward into rotating blades which serve as a crushing mill and passes the fine particles out again through a perforated drum to settle into the grass.

Another unit, trailer mounted with tractor hitch, utilizes the vacuum principle to suck the leaves up into a hammer-mill after they have been loosened by a rotary rake. Leaves are pulverized and blown out through a protective screen onto the ground where they settle into the grass as a soil conditioner.

This is but a brief review of the equipment available that can be used in fall course maintenance work and make possible an unhindered extended playing season. Operating heads of clubs ever alert to ways of increasing the potential of golf play should not overlook the advantages to be gained by the study and practical application of modern equipment. If the weather doesn't interfere and equipment will do it, make a longer playing season a longer **paying** season.

Acknowledgement of Error

The July issue of *Golfdom* carried the announcement that the USGA had awarded the 1950 National Open to the Merion Cricket Club, Ardmore, Pa. (Phila. dist.). The editors of *Golfdom* acknowledge the mistake in identity of the club brought to our attention by Mr. Paul L. Lewis, Golf Chairman, which should have read, Merion Golf Club. The golf courses which were a part of the Merion Cricket Club before 1942 were taken over by a new club—the Merion Golf Club—on March 1, 1942.

The Merion Golf Club maintains both the championship east and west course which will entertain the Women's Amateur Championship in 1949 and the National Open in 1950.