

# Modern Greenkeeping Sets Stage for Golf's Future

By HERB GRAFFIS

Address before the annual meeting of the National Greenkeeping Superintendents Association, Los Angeles, Feb. 7-11, 1949.

Today golf has a few more than 4900 courses. About two thirds of them are 9 hole courses. Most people are inclined to think of golf still as primarily a rich man's game but the actual figures correct that view. There are only 1195 private 18 hole clubs in the United States. Two thirds of all U. S. courses are public or semi-public.

We hear figures all the way from 7,000,000 down as the number of golfers. But when you get studying membership figures and data from public and semi-public courses and the sales of golf playing equipment you learn that there are around 3,000,000 who really can be considered active golfers.

American golf clubs have a plant investment of approximately one billion dollars. This represents about \$300 of investment for each of the active players. That's big money in any sport except the national debt. Each week during the height of the season at American golf clubs is spent more than organized baseball takes in at its parks during any month. Of course not all of it is spent for golf at golf clubs. There are far more rounds of drinks bought at golf clubs than there are rounds of golf played.

These cold figures are cited to call attention to the seldom recognized fact that the greenkeeping superintendent is the one essential factor in the operation of a gigantic sports business. There are thousands of courses without professionals or clubhouse managers but even the 9-hole cow-pasture sand green course must have someone caring for it, whether he's called greenkeeping superintendent, greenkeeper, care-taker or farmer.

The past and the present in golf depend basically on the greenkeeper keeping a course attractive, even for players who can't break 100, and at a cost private club members, semi-public course owners or public recreation bodies can afford. The future of the business of golf also depends on excellent and economical course maintenance.

Economy is constantly impressed upon the greenkeeping superintendent. As a matter of fact, the greenkeeper generally is the first object of economy. After about a quarter century of being rather close to the inside of American golf business in all its phases I'd say that today there aren't more than 50 greenkeeping superintendents in the U. S. who are paid salaries commensurate with the ability, hours, responsibility and amount of plant investment involved in their jobs.

Around Los Angeles, as in many other metropolitan golf sectors there are caddies who earn more than greenkeepers. That certainly is unpardonably poor management by the successful businessmen who are club directors. If they applied the same policy to their own businesses they wouldn't be able to afford private club membership.

That's the reason very few highly desirable young men are coming into greenkeeping and a considerable number of middleaged experts are getting out of it to increase their earnings by going into other fields of turf culture and gardening. A club can only get a well qualified greenkeeper today by paying some fellow more money than he's been getting on his present job and even then it's difficult to woo the man away. He generally is in love with his course. When you're in love your judgment isn't all it should be.

Young men rarely are available for management of a course where high maintenance standards are demanded. About the only group of young men I know being trained as competent greenkeepers are those in the two-year and 14 week short courses conducted by Prof. Dickinson at Massachusetts State college. The majority of them are young professionals who realize they'll have to know how to manage golf courses in order to be qualified to handle combination greenkeeper-pro jobs at smaller clubs where the revenue is limited and the size of the club permits a dual operation.

At the larger clubs the experienced pro-

fessional is too wise and too busy to undertake the risky and numerous and complex problems of greenkeeping. His teaching and merchandising give him enough problems. He knows that the better the condition of the course, the more play there'll be and the greater his income but he's got worries enough with people. He doesn't want to add worries with grass to his troubles.

### **Greenkeeper Worries**

The greenkeeper has to worry about people and grass. Players come ahead of grass as far as the greenkeeper is concerned. Nature takes a different view. The greenkeeper is caught in a crossfire.

By national and sectional educational conferences, short courses at state agricultural schools, the United States Golf Association's Green Section and other research he has learned so much about solving the problems of grass he's created another and tougher problem with people. Now players on a public course expect a higher standard of turf condition than the finest, wealthiest and luckiest private club had 20 years ago.

A great many of the problems the golf business will have to meet in the future can only be solved by greenkeeping superintendents learning more about people and money — and very soon.

On the people problem, the superintendent must be aware of a conflicting situation that exists in golf today. At most of the metropolitan district private clubs the average age of members is well over 50 years. There are waiting lists and high initiation fees and dues. Desirable young businessmen couldn't afford to join. Saturdays and Sundays the public and semi-public courses that haven't been subdivided are jammed like a beach on D-day.

### **School Golf Growing**

Golf in high schools and colleges is growing faster than the capacity of courses to absorb these recruits who'll begin playing on their own money before many more years have passed. It isn't generally realized but there are more than 60 golf courses owned and operated by American colleges and universities. Junior golf promotion at clubs, as many greenkeeping superintendents have commented, is one of the greatest jobs the professionals are doing today.

George Lake of Long Beach, where an outstanding job of public course junior golf education has been done, heads a

PGA committee to further develop the junior program and coordinate pro work with promotion of the USGA junior championship, the Western junior championship, the Women's Western junior event, the Junior Chamber of Commerce national boys' championship, the National Caddy Association championship, the Hearst newspapers' national junior championship and other newspaper and golf organization sectional junior events.

These activities and the Western Golf association Evans caddie scholarships are of vital and foresighted importance to golf. The caddie carts, in addition to creating a new problem for greenkeepers in green to tee routes, have reduced the demand for caddies. But they've also made golf cheaper. Junior promotion is needed to bring into the game youngsters who formerly came in only because they got paid for being exposed to the lure of golf.

Yet, despite junior promotion that this spring probably will be reaching between a million and a million and a half boys and girls I have heard of only two cases of a greenkeeping superintendent talking to groups of these youngsters and telling them about the problems and objectives of course maintenance and what cooperation properly could be expected of the educated golfer.

### **Contact Junior Groups**

Unless the greenkeepers make effective contact with this junior field soon the future of the golf business for the greenkeeping superintendent won't brighten as it should — and must — to attract a quality of new material up to the class of the present generation.

Greenkeepers have been at the foundation of the present low-scoring tournament play in golf. The greenkeepers' program of education has paid off, but for the clubs and tournament players. The thoughtful leading professionals have seen the results of the greenkeeping superintendents' educational program. They are beginning to establish this sort of schooling for their own department of the golf business. It has been said that if pro golf had gone at its teaching problem the same way the greenkeepers have gone at their turf maintenance problems the average scoring of the American golfer would be many strokes less than the present average in the 90s.

The progress greenkeepers have spurred and assisted in extending mechanization of

*(Continued on page 92)*



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lesions start as tiny brown specks on the leaves and enlarge until they may extend across the leaf. Then they cause the leaf to wither and turn brown. The tissue in the center of the spot becomes straw-colored, and has a narrow outer border, which is dark brown to black in color. In aggravated cases the entire leaf sheath is infected and turns brown. The stem and crown of the plant may become infected, and result in death to the entire plant. This type of leaf spot is called footrot. Permanent damage to the turf occurs during the footrot stage.

Leaf spot is most prevalent during moist cool weather, especially in spring. There is some evidence indicating that the sole and continuous use of chemical nitrogen aggravates the disease.

There are no treatments for leaf spot. Raising the height of cut to permit the development of more leaf surface is about all that can be done.

**Brown patch and dollar spot:** Both of these diseases have attacked bent grass fairways. Severe damage is rare. Recovery from brown patch occurs after weather becomes cooler. Total loss of grass has never been reported. Dollar spot is uncommon on well fertilized fairways, and is

most prevalent on turf which does not get enough nitrogen. Injury has never been sufficient to necessitate fungicide treatment. Turf comes back and is usually better the next year because the disease thinned the grass and eliminated part of the heavy mat.

## MODERN GREENKEEPING

*(Continued from page 72)*

golf course maintenance and in making use of chemistry has been a life-saver for golf. Without this development golfers simply couldn't afford courses of today's standard. But there is reason to believe that, given a hand by informed club officials, the greenkeepers will carry this work much farther in the next ten years. If they don't continue to supply the impetus for this progress golf's expected growth will be sharply checked. That means the clubs, the golf goods manufacturers, the professionals and the club managers all will be disappointed financially.

### Salary Lag Greenkeepers' Fault

Financially the golf clubs' picture now is in sounder condition than it's ever been before. But that's not been reflected in a

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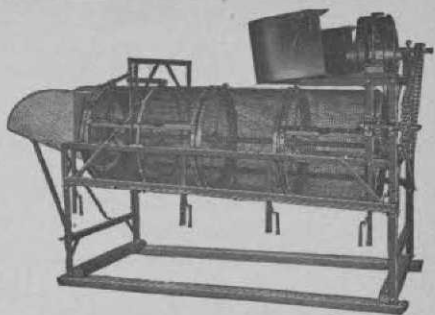
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general equitable advance in greenkeepers' pay. And to be frank about it, a basic part of the salary lag is the greenkeeping superintendents' own fault in not making known their knowledge of the entire financial, operating and membership status of their clubs. The case, too often, with greenkeepers is that their boundary of the business picture of golf is limited by course maintenance budgets.

When the greenkeeper studies his club as a business instead of allowing himself to be regarded by golfers and club officials as just another toiler in the fancier stages of farming, then golfers will discover the greenkeeping superintendent as the key-stone in the future of golf, with the 15,-000,000 players some consider to be the potential roster of golfers within the next 15 years.

As far as all knowing parties in other phases of the game are concerned, the better the greenkeeper does the better it will be for them. At a luncheon of your conference and show committee I heard Randolph Scott, green chairman at Bel-Air make the most realistic and hopeful comment on course superintendent's work I've heard for a long time. In commenting

on the \$4,000 fund from the Southern California Golf and Public Links associations for this convention's expenses, Scott said: "We at the clubs are confident we'll get more than \$4,000 back in what you men learn at this meeting." Randy has been a green chairman just one year but he is learning fast and right. His confidence about dividends on the \$4,000 investment is well founded. This meeting probably will mean a million dollars in directly traceable benefits to golf courses and others interested in turf. Colin Simpson's effect on club officials and the deft propaganda of Maury Luxford show more promise for Southern California Supts. than I've seen in other districts.

Someday in the future golfers generally may recognize the source of the benefits in better playing conditions with greater maintenance economy. Today they don't. Much of the future growth and prosperity of the golf business depends on proper understanding and reward of the greenkeeping superintendent's work.

How this essential factor will or can be handled is still anybody's guess. The superintendent can't depend on the average chairman to spread the gospel. The chair-

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man generally gets fed up with his job quickly. He says to himself — maybe to others — "I joined the club to come out and have fun, not to carry a responsibility and get criticized. The hell with it." So he refuses to accept another term, quits to enjoy himself and leaves the superintendent to get "the hell with it."

## PROPER DIAGNOSIS

(Continued from page 40)

but where it is not maintained as the greens. Mowing at almost green height and raking may be necessary to keep this mat from forming. Greens turf even though mowed quite close may also develop this mat.

**WASHBOARD EFFECT ON FAIRWAYS** — As faster tractors have developed for mowing fairways, this condition has become more common. Although it cannot be classed as a cause for turf failure, this condition does spoil the playing surface and results in a poor mowing job. Fast mowing combined with improperly adjusted mowers will cause this washboard effect. If the reel is screwed down so that it is too tight against the bedknife, the rotation of the reel tends to raise the rear roller off the ground. As the mower moves down the fairway, the roller will jump up and down producing the rippled effect in the grass surface and eventually in the soil surface.

**MOWER OUT OF ADJUSTMENT** — A desirable putting surface on a green is primarily the result of good mowing. Unless the mower is cutting evenly and cleanly a poor putting surface will result. If the leaf blades are chewed-off by a dull, poorly adjusted mower, the cut ends will turn brown. Such mowing provides easy entrance for disease organisms.

**POOR AIR CIRCULATION** — Masses of trees or underbrush which shade a green and prevent air circulation cause the grass and soil to dry very slowly. Such a green will probably have more disease, and more trouble from puddled, compacted soil and shallow rooted turf. Remove underbrush and tree limbs up to 15 feet and whole trees if necessary to get adequate air circulation.

**POOR SURFACE OR UNDERGROUND DRAINAGE** — Grass cannot make healthy growth in a water-logged soil since the grass roots must have air. Poorly drained greens are usually problem greens in all respects. Adequate drainage should be provided