

Clubs Reap Benefits by Supts. Attending Turf Meetings

By JOE GRAFFIS

Not one golfer in a thousand realizes what's behind the vast improvement in golf course condition that has taken place during the past 20 years. The old-timers, pros and amateurs, know that tees now generally are better than most greens used to be. Fairways at the modernly-maintained clubs are so much better than fairways were 20 years ago there's no comparison.

Despite the fact that course labor wages have increased in the past 20 years the increase has been far short of the increase in unit and total wages in American industry. The costs of U.S. golf turf advance have been kept under remarkably tight control by a combination of technical developments that will compare very favorably with the progress made in almost any other business in the nation.

Behind this notable picture of progress are factors of research and education that any golfer who is an executive in industry would learn, upon investigation, almost unparalleled. Rarely is an executive in industry lucky enough to have his factory superintendents devote the time, money, brains and enthusiasm to betterment of plant operating methods that the golf course superintendents devote to the intensely practical and valuable education of the superintendents' national and sectional conferences.

Turf research has been exceedingly well planned and coordinated by the USGA Green Section with Director Fred Grau and state and other sectional agricultural school experts in close expert collaboration. Participation in this research and application of it is extensively and capably done primarily through the medium of the superintendents' organizations.

There often are heavy handicaps to the progress of this research and its use. Lack of money is the main one although there probably isn't a golf course in the United States that hasn't received from the turf research and the greenkeepers' meetings far more direct cash benefit than the club ever spent in these operations. Only within the past few years has it become common practice for clubs to pay expenses of their greenkeepers or superintendents to the annual meeting of the superintendents' national organization or to the regional annual conferences. Even now when superintendents take their Mondays off to go to sectional meetings the men often have to go at their own expense to learn what's

new and discuss with their colleagues problems of their respective courses.

The club official who compares the salary of the golf course greenkeeper or superintendent with that paid to men of like responsibility in the official's own business must especially appreciate that the golf course boss in devoting his off day to the good of the business is doing something most uncommon in American industry.

Specifically, what has this accent on education meant to golf course maintenance?

GOLFDOM asked representative superintendents to tell instances of benefits their clubs had received as results of these meetings.

The replies will be found to make most informative reading for anyone who qualifies as a green chairman of decided value to his club.

The frank answer of Bert Rost, supt., Park Ridge (Ill.) CC makes an instructive opening. Rost writes:

"Thanks for the opportunity of expressing my views on the benefits received by clubs and club officials through the superintendent's exchange of experiences and study of turf research at our personal, sectional and national meetings. I have added personal to your inquiry as I believe this to be the most important and informative phase of our many meetings. You can easily remember when one Greenkeeper (as we used to be called) would hardly speak to another for fear of letting his competitor (and that is the way most of us acted) find out one of our secrets. In reality we were probably afraid the other fellow would find out how much we didn't know.

"This afternoon Bob Williams, Ray Gerber, Oscar Borgmier and I are playing at Ridgemoor. Playing together is just a means for us to get together and talk grass, as you know. I will venture that our club will benefit a few hundred bucks by my taking the afternoon off if you want to put it that way.

"Among the many ideas I have got at local and national meetings, probably the one that has helped our course most is the use of the aerifier. We use it spring and fall and have for the past four years. Before we had a hard time to find enough grass to warrant cutting the fairways twice a week although they were fertilized three times a year. Now in a season like we have just had they almost require daily cutting with the same amount of fertilizer.

"I think club officials should insist that

their superintendent attend all meetings. If he isn't willing to do this then it is time for them to start looking for a progressive head of their business. If the reason is he doesn't have the time or is short of labor on the course I'll bet he can, by discussing it with a member or two, find a few labor saving machines or ideas that will give him time to get away.

Engage U. of Ill. in Turf Research

"I am chairman of the Turf Research committee of the Midwest Assn. of Golf Course Supts. We have the task of getting the University of Illinois engaged in a turf research program and that means a campaign on the state legislature for funds to enable the university to engage in the needed work. We have a good start in the experimental garden at Lisle.

"The scope of this proposed work will be wide although the primary application will be to golf courses. Few realize that there is more spent annually for grass seed in Illinois than is represented by the value of the state's apple crop. Despite the great volume of fertilizer sales for home lawns in Illinois I venture to say there are more lawns ruined by improper use of fertilizer than have been helped.

"Our own courses come first but the home lawns, parks, cemeteries, roadside turfing, airfields and industrial areas have benefitted to the extent of many millions of dollars by turf development and maintenance methods first presented by golf course work."

"What do I get from meetings of golf course superintendents?" asks Chet Mendenhall, supt., Mission Hills CC, Kansas City, Mo. "Just this. Here in the heart of America, the golf course superintendents hold a meeting once a month the year around. This has been going on for eighteen years. Golf is played only on special occasions. There is no card playing so there has to be an exchange of practical golf course maintenance ideas to support the fine attendance we have enjoyed during these years.

"A member tells his experience with some new crabgrass killer; maybe his experience has been disappointing. Some one else tells him where he made his mistake in time or method of application, and before long all types of weed killers have been thoroughly discussed and I have some ideas regarding materials I haven't had the occasion as yet to use.

"At one of our meetings there was a discussion pertaining to the keeping of cost records. A very simple method of cost accounting was presented by one member which I have partially adopted. This has saved me several hours each month in the distribution of labor costs.

"At local meetings the superintendent gets more practical information that he

can apply immediately to his own work. While at the national meetings, turf conferences and short courses attended by manufacturers and research men as well as superintendent, one gets a look into the future with first hand information on the development of new grass strains, new chemicals and new equipment that is being developed to speed up and cut cost of maintenance.

"The maintenance of a golf course and the country club grounds isn't a job that can be done efficiently by the superintendent alone. First, he needs the wholehearted support of his committee and club officials. Then, he needs the helping hand of research, the USGA Green Section, colleges that are carrying on recognized fine turf research work, manufacturers who make machinery, fertilizer or other chemical products used in turf maintenance. Last, but not least, he needs the publications which bring the results of this work to the golf course superintendent, — Golfdom, The USGA Journal, The Golf Course Reporter, and a number of local publications.

"Indeed, the maintenance of a golf course requires the help and advice of a great many people and it is indeed unfortunate that some club officials don't see the light and set aside funds to send their superintendent to attend such local and national meetings where he can get the help he and his club can wisely use."

Leonard Strong, supt., Saucon Valley CC, Bethlehem, Pa., says, "From Prof. John Schread's lecture at the 20th National Turf Conference at Los Angeles in 1949 on "Control of Insects Injurious to Turf" I gained a great deal of practical knowledge in regard to the use and subsequent results of chlordane. I have since used this new insecticide with its three modes of action and found it most effective. One of the items for which it was used and on which it did a swell job was the extermination of ants on the borders of several of our greens."

"Probably the most important thing I have gotten out of attending association meetings is that it has given me an opportunity to get away from my own course and visit other courses and get together with other supts.," reports William Stupple, supt., Exmoor CC, Highland Park, Ill.

"This I believe," he continues, "is of the utmost value to all of us. The practical experiences of others and the knowledge gained from listening to others is down-to-earth, practical know-how that one can never get out of a book. It's the on-the-spot discussion that one learns from most.

"Probably one of the most valued experiences I have had was at an association and Green Section meeting at Laskers when Dr. Monteith came out with his treat-

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SUPERINTENDENTS BENEFIT

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ment of weeds with arsenicals. This, to me, was truly the beginning of the present era of good weed-free turf. His lessons made a very great impression on me and they have been used on our courses to great advantage."

Wes Updegraff, supt., Wichita (Kans.) CC credits informative association and sup'ts. meetings as being responsible for "practically all improvements made on golf courses in this part of the country." He says, "we learned about the new bent — C1-C19 at these meetings. All 20 of our greens have been planted and we are completely satisfied that they make the finest putting greens possible."

"U-3 Bermuda has proven very good for tees. They heal over well and we cut them 5/16" and have fewer divots at this close cut. We have learned crabgrass can now be controlled with a number of crabgrass killers. Fairways are going to be seeded with Highland bent and Astoria bent."

"Through the association meetings our golf course becomes an experiment station for all new ideas. Each new thing we learn we experiment with until we are satisfied it is what we want for our own course and then we use it."

"We find that about 75 per cent of our club members use our improvements on their own yards and estates. We would be unable to help all these people if we did not attend our meetings, turf conferences and Field days."

Bill Brady, supt., Maple Bluff CC, Madison, Wis., says "The meetings we have had in Wisconsin are very helpful in all aspects of course maintenance. While attending a meeting in Milwaukee, I was lamenting over the fact that although I had watered fairways, I also had two that are not watered because they are short iron holes. One supt. told me that if I would give the fairway that was not watered a medium shot of fertilizer around the first week in July they would hold bet-

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ter. I applied approximately 400 lbs. of Milorganite the first week of July and three weeks later we had a four weeks dry spell with hot drying wind, with temperatures of 90-94 for one whole week. The unwatered fairways held surprisingly well.

"We now have had two beautiful weeks of grass growing weather and in comparing the fairways, it is fairly impossible to tell which were unwatered."

G. M. Dearie, supt., Edgewater GC, Chicago, Ill., tells some of the many things he has learned about growing and caring for turf at superintendent's meetings and short courses. He says,

"When a greenkeeper has a turf problem at his Club, he is anxious to get information that will help him, and to whom else would he turn but his fellow Greenkeepers. That is the main object of the Greenkeepers Meeting each month. Here he sees his associates and some of them have at some time or other been confronted with the same problem that is bothering him. Here we have the opportunity to talk privately together, and when the formal meeting gets underway we have the chance to state our problems to the group and get the best information available. Some of the knowledge is acquired from practical experience and some by science.

"I have used to great advantage a solution I worked out with Graham Gardiner several years ago, when he used it at Park Ridge CC and obtained good results. This was to correct a soil compaction condition of greens with an application of pea gravel. The green is top-dressed with pea gravel, according to the condition of the compaction of the soil. The average application is one yard of pea gravel to 5000 sq. ft. This application is followed by a continued spiking until all particles of gravel are worked into the soil. Several treatments may be necessary to correct the condition.

"The short course given for the greenkeeper who is interested in improving his course and acquiring valuable information is a wonderful help. Here he gets facts, everything has been tested before it is presented to the greenkeeper and he can have all the information as to application, treatment and results.

"I obtained my idea of fertilizer versus seed over ten years ago, at a plot demonstration in Arlington, Virginia, where Dr. Montieth explained and proved a small amount of seed and plenty of fertilizer will give you better turf than a heavy seeding and light fertilizing. I have used this to great advantage ever since.

"In short, at Greenkeeper meetings and

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short courses we get the answers to our problems if there are answers, and if there are not, we work together to find them."

Lawrence Huber, supt., Ohio State University GC, Columbus, says it is hard to point out any one thing learned from attending Turf Conferences and association meetings. Such an undertaking would require the listing of a great many facts, short cuts, new methods, etc. He says, in listing some of them in the order of importance, "I would say that 2,4-D has brought about the most important change made in the last five or six years on courses over the country. With the fungus and pest control we have today courses have shown vast improvement over past years.

"Aerifying in the last few years has proven its worth in getting the water to penetrate deeper into our clay soils and in letting the fertilizer down around the roots, all of which has resulted in better turf.

"These are a few of the outstanding things which come to mind at the moment; but let me add that a great deal is learned today from reading the fine golf and turf magazines that are published."

R. C. Bowman, supt., Lakewood CC, Dallas, Texas, says one of the great tips

he got at the annual turf conference last year and the thing that brought the most praise from members was how to handle nap on greens. At the proper time nap was taken off the greens and when the new grass came back he had the best putting surface ever.

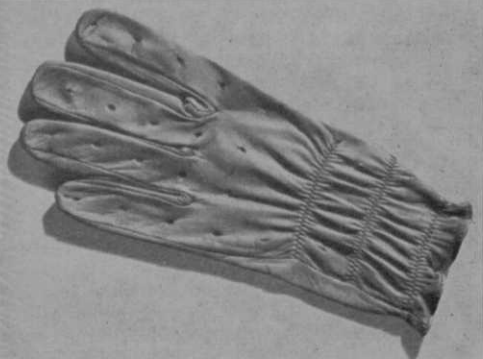
PRO DEPT. TUNES IN

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tains that many of a golfing resort's patrons are people who are greatly benefited by a few tips—just enough, and simple enough, to be easily and deeply absorbed. Naturally much of this work has to be what a doctor might call emergency treatment as it's a sure thing a brief golf clinical session isn't going to remake a man's or woman's game.

Obitz maintains that considerable of this clinic treatment has resulted in a lot of less money for pros at points from which the Shawnee guests hail. Many of the clinic patients haven't taken golf instruction for years—or at all—because they had no idea pro instruction could be so helpful.

Harry says that he and his staff in numerous cases follow the medical general practitioner's line and refer the pa-



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