

Plan Off-Season Work While Traffic Is Heavy

By LEO J. FESER

Surely Shakespeare let poetry flow from his quill when he entitled his comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Notes taken by the modern golf course superintendent during July and August savor more of the nightmare.

Twentieth century chemistry has given the man in charge of the golf course a number of magic potions to ease his dread of dead and dying turf, but for him, mid-summer will never be a time of sweet tranquility. Nevertheless, notes taken at that time provide an accurate basis for action that may well make future dreams more pleasant.

Philosophical acceptance of the fact that the height of the golfing season in Northern parts of our country coincides with the period of difficult time for turf, does not alter the fact that the days of the Northern golfer's year are numbered. The efficient superintendent strives to give the best possible during these limited days, and the wise green chairman will use his influence to permit maximum efficiency. All the resources of labor, materials, equipment and skill are required to do the job at hand. Despite the urgency for action, it is probable that the greatest single service a superintendent can render at that time is thru the judicious use of notebook and pencil.

Note the Needed Work

Notes taken on observations of players, facilities and equipment during the mid-summer nightmare afford an excellent basis for fall and winter work. Player congestion during the peak season may have been caused by a narrow path that Indians only should use. Trees and shrubs that added nothing but player annoyance should get the attention they deserve. Rough that caught only the pop flies caused more loss of time hunting than Teddy Roosevelt spent in Africa. That green with the steep pitch that caused hole-high balls to roll ten feet onto the apron when putted down may now be in for a face-lifting.

How about player comfort when the sun was high and hot? Those gasping golfers who crossed yards and yards of sandy waste, hoping to find life-giving water over the next rise, will be back again next year. A nice drinking fountain or two that will spout forth when touched will make the superintendent who

installed it as popular as Moses when he smote the rock. The notes may recall those sudden thunderstorms that drenched the customers and sent their questionable hearts pounding as they dashed like Sheridan, with shelter 20 miles away. They may also cause to be recalled that apprehensive, longing, pressing and finally desperate searching for a haven on the part of the unfortunate who could no longer bluff nature's call. These notes call for a shelter house with another one further back, or better yet, a possible combination job.

Tips from Locker-room Wails

The bewitching bellyaching in the locker-room during the season's top should not be overlooked. Notes taken on the condemnation proceedings of this court of no appeal will no doubt provide much basic material for course improvement. (Incidentally, notes taken at that time will provide heavy ammunition for the annual battle of the budget. The locker-room griper will not long remember what he said there, but with adequate notes, a good green chairman will never forget what he did there.) All locker-room complaints are not simple gripes, however, and many excellent improvements have been made in playing facilities because somebody was willing to do something about them.

Let's step off of the course proper for a moment, and see what might be done to make our people happier. There never has been and perhaps never will be a perfect parking area. This highly important space is always subject to improvement; it might be extended. (Always extend parking areas toward the front entrance of the club house, even if the removal of a pillar or two is necessary. Golfers who cheerfully hike three miles playing, usually find it exceedingly difficult to drag themselves more than 30 feet from car to canopy.) Resurfacing of the area may add to its usability and life. Parking design and markings should receive some attention. Roadways do a big job; consider them.

Other Off-Course Problems

Another off-course problem that will defy the genius of three or more wise men is the caddy business. The superintendent who is willing to give some thought and time to possible improve-

ments in housing, playgrounds, sanitary facilities, refreshment facilities and traffic routes for caddies, will minimize future aggravations from this ever-present source. Traffic routes of caddies are but a part of the total foot-traffic problems. The clubhouse, pro-shop, bag-cart storage rooms, lawns, pool and tennis courts all demand definite traffic routes, some of which may be beneficially modified as much as present-day cloverleaves modify the flow of vehicular movements.

Back to the course proper again, it seems almost presumptive to suggest items for consideration of the green chairman and the superintendent. With the opening of schools and colleges, the young blood will be leaving the golf course labor ranks, and the dearth of labor we experienced last spring will again be a reality.

A few principles might be suggested that will help with the vexing question of deciding where available labor can best be used. So far we have considered some of the desirable extra-curricular improvements that could be made to keep our people happier. It is well to keep in mind that there are many essential items in maintaining the golf plant that must receive consideration after the midsummer nightmare.

The most essential consideration is that of turf. Areas that were damaged can not be ignored. Sodding and seeding must be done. Here it is well to consider the factors that brought on the damage. If caused by a solvable traffic problem, it is obviously better to solve the problem than continue to struggle with the effect. Likewise, if poor varieties of grass went out, they should be replaced with better ones. If excessive shade or moisture is responsible for the injury, correct the condition. A simple workable rule: "Correct the cause; the cure is costly."

There are many good, playable golf courses that require but a fraction of the time and labor required to maintain others. This is, of course, due to a number of factors, some of which cannot be controlled. But it is apparent that the course designed to use power equipment efficiently has an advantage over the one where much hand work is necessary. Where alterations that will permit the reasonable use of more economical equipment can be made, it is poor business to neglect making them. Likewise, if the equipment used is not economical in operation, more money goes down the sewer.

Figuring the Costs

No plan for fall and winter work can be worthy of the paper it is written on, unless the equipment and facilities available to do the job are of high efficiency. The superintendent and green chairman who are responsible for the execution of

any plan of alteration must carefully consider the choice of method. Purchase of good equipment for making alterations has oftentimes saved clubs good money on a specific job, and the equipment was left in club ownership, ready for the next job. On the other hand, it is obviously poor business to invest in costly equipment that will depreciate in value at a rate higher than outside contractors would charge for the use of their equipment. The choice must be made by the responsible parties after all factors are considered.

The ability and ingenuity of the men who care for our golf plants, coupled with the work done by reserach people and manufacturers, has kept the cost of golf maintenance within reasonable limits despite general inflation. There remains much to be done. If the trend is to continue toward better quality, intelligent planning and efficient execution of those plans are of fundamental importance.

The loosely organized business of golf is complicated by weather, climate, soil, economic condition, terrain, labor availability, and technological problems without number. Planning progress despite complications is the job faced by the green chairman and the superintendent. Pope said it well, "A mighty maze! but not without a plan."

Field Days and Conferences

- Aug. 5—Field Day, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N. J.
- Aug. 20-21—Field Day, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, R. I.
- Sept. 3-4—Field Day, Pennsylvania State College, State College, Pa.
- Sept. 24—Field Day, Greater Cincinnati Golfers' League and Cincinnati Golf Course Superintendents.
- Oct. 6-7—Turf Conference, University of California, Los Angeles, Calif.
- Oct. 9-10—Turf Conference, University of California, Berkeley, Calif.
- Oct. 13-14—Turf Conference, Washington State College, Pullman, Wash.
- Oct. 22-24—Third Turf Conference, Central Plains Turf Foundation and Kansas State College, Manhattan, Kans.
- Nov. 17-21—American Society of Agronomy meetings, Netherlands Plaza Hotel, Cincinnati, Ohio.
- Dec. 1-3—Texas Turf Conference, Texas A & M College, College Station, Texas.