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Course Problems Surveyed

GOLF SEES PROBLEMS AND CONSIDERS ANSWERS

GOLFDOM asked practical authorities in course maintenance and pro departments what they regarded as golf's major problems.

Some of the answers are printed in this issue, which, as usual, combines October, November and December *GOLFDOM* into an annual Review and Planning Number. Other comments from successful professionals and golf course superintendents will be printed in January, 1953 *GOLFDOM* and subsequent issues as the large response exceeded space available in any one issue of *GOLFDOM*.

The wage and other management problems and the 1952 maintenance difficulties of the superintendents, and the professionals' recognition of golf promotion responsibilities and business opportunities, not only make the most valuable information men in charge of courses and pro departments could study, but provide required reading for club officials.

The superintendents' frank statements about the labor situation is one of the facts of life that few men in charge of courses would have told their officials a few years ago. Now the situation is so serious that the superintendents must speak bluntly or the standard of U. S. golf course condition will deteriorate rapidly. — Herb Graffis, Editor.

Labor is the most serious problem of golf course operation. The standard of course maintenance, regardless of scientific advances, will be lowered unless wages meet competitive figures of industry.

So believe numerous leading golf course superintendents who have been queried by *GOLFDOM*. The superintendents have had to contend with the labor factor just as club officials have had to meet the labor issue in their plants. The plants have raised wages and given benefits of vacations, sick leaves, retirement plans, insurance, minimum annual wage guarantees and other inducements. The golf clubs, in any location where there is industrial competition for labor, are licked and have had to depend largely on old men or lads during school vacations to do course work.

In some instances, so superintendents told *GOLFDOM*, damage suffered by courses last summer probably could have been prevented had enough competent men been available for emergency work.

The superintendents have tried everything genius can devise as a substitute for money in meeting wage competition for course labor but the substitutes haven't been found acceptable by desirable

workmen. The only saving element has been that some men like outdoor work on courses so much they'll work at it for less than they can get in other jobs.

Frankly, expertly and with foresight the superintendents tell their views of the labor situation and other important factors in the course maintenance picture in the following reports. *GOLFDOM* considers these reports the most valuable assistance club officials and Green committees could have at this time as a sound basis for making policies and programs.

Modernize Wages and Courses

By JAMES A. REID
Supt., The Suburban Club of Baltimore County
Pikesville, Md.

There are many important problems confronting green superintendents but perhaps what is to be considered the most basic problem is the labor situation. Of course one has to go through a process of elimination to get good workers, but it is very difficult when a superintendent does find men who are suited for their jobs, to find that his club will not cooperate by granting adequate remuneration for work well done.

The clubs seem to lose sight of the

fact that a laborer who is willing to work and who has a good job with a good salary will produce more efficiently and with less direct supervision than one who has no real motivation. Golf clubs, on the whole, are far behind the times in the compensation which they give their employees for the fine jobs that they do. Not until they lose their best workers do they realize how little they save by their attitude.

Along the same line, more effective labor production could be achieved by many of the older clubs (broadly speaking, those in existence for more than 20 years) if they were to do some remodeling and building in order to get the most out of their modern equipment. Sharp banks and high mounds that prevent the use of power greens mowers or aerifiers or prevent the trimming of greens and traps with tractor equipment cost the course superintendent much in time and labor spent in caring for them with old-fashioned hand methods. With the elimination of these hazards the men needed to care for them could be freed for odd jobs that otherwise would not be done—getting corners cleaned out, that creek bank mowed, ball marks on the green lifted, or those tee divots cared for.

This past season has been one of the toughest known to golf superintendents. Many have been on the job day and night fighting first the wet spring, then the driest summer in years which produced brownpatch, dollar spot, damping out, grubs and worms.

Of course, the crowning touch is to have some member say that the course is in terrible condition because he has lost a golf match, or maybe a golf ball.

Golf course superintendents are the hardest working group of fellows to be found anywhere, and they are certainly interested in their work. It would help a great deal if committee chairmen and club officials could look in at the association meetings or the national convention and see the interest displayed by the superintendents in not only their own problems, but in the problems of their fellow workers.

Remodeling Programs Required

By WILLIAM A. BRADY
Supt., Maple Bluff Country Club
Madison, Wis.

One of the problems confronting future-thinking superintendents is the economical remodeling and reconstruction necessary to fit the modern golfer. Golf courses all over the country are going to be faced with the need for longer holes.

Top-notch golf pros in the last decade have been teaching classes of teen-agers, interesting increasing numbers in the

game itself. Golf has become more important in school athletics, competitive and recreational. Also, increased leisure time and shorter working hours have increased the number of players on both public and private golf courses.

These factors have produced, and will produce, better average golfers. The score card for the most active golfer is no longer in the 90's but in the 80's and he drives a consistently longer ball, making golf on many courses more of a pitch-and-putt game.

This will necessitate longer holes for golf courses that were constructed in past years. The problem is not always that there is insufficient acreage to change the situation, but that the remodeling is going to need at least a three-year program, keeping in mind both economy and the golfer's right to have a well-groomed course at all times.

Another problem facing superintendents in the Madison and Milwaukee areas is that we can't get the proper sand for our compost. None of the local sand and gravel companies think it worthwhile to invest in screens to give us what we want, and the source of proper sand is so far away that the freight and hauling charges are prohibitive. As it reaches our sidings we would have to pay in excess of \$12 per ton plus hauling charges from siding to golf course. So far, we have not been able to work out a solution to this local problem.

Big "Headache" Is Labor

By TREVOR E. JONES
Supt., The Country Club of Fairfield
Fairfield, Conn.

Many of the superintendents' headaches are minimized today by the wonderful work being done by experimental stations, the universities and colleges doing turf research, and the hard work of Fred Grau, Dr. DeFrance, and others like them. Our "tough nut" is labor; how to get help and keep it under the conditions that prevail in this area.

Bridgeport is a booming industrial city where anyone who can crawl to a time clock can double the weekly wage a golf club can afford to pay.

The days when a strong back was a requisite for a golf course worker are gone. The mowing is done by expensive precision machinery that must be operated by a person with at least average intelligence. Power machines can cause much damage, if not used correctly, to the machine itself, the operator or the green, which is the focal point of any golf course.

Men we wouldn't accept for employment on the golf course invariably find work in local factories and get paid more

than a college man can demand after graduation.

It is impossible for golf courses to compete with these inflationary measures. Until the American economy and dollar bill return to normal, which we nor our children may never see, there can be no relief from this situation.

Regardless of problems such as this, today's golfers still demand perfection, and even after that, improvements. But they give no thought as to how a dollar can be stretched to entice a worker who will do a job to the best of his ability for less than a minimum factory wage.

New Problems In Watering

By BOB WILLIAMS
Supt., Beverly Country Club
Chicago, Ill.

The most important problem confronting me in turf management today is the factor of fairway irrigation in the production of better fairway turf. I say this even though we have one of the best water systems by comparison to other clubs.

Our system is capable of producing 450 gals. per minute at 135 lbs. pressure at the pump. We can operate 11 sprinklers at one time with a center line installation and each sprinkler covering approximately a 200 ft. diameter. We can cover about six fairways in one night with one man operation.

Our fairway turf is comprised of creeping bent, poa annua and poa trivialis. This combination of grasses must be kept rather short if a good turf is to be ex-

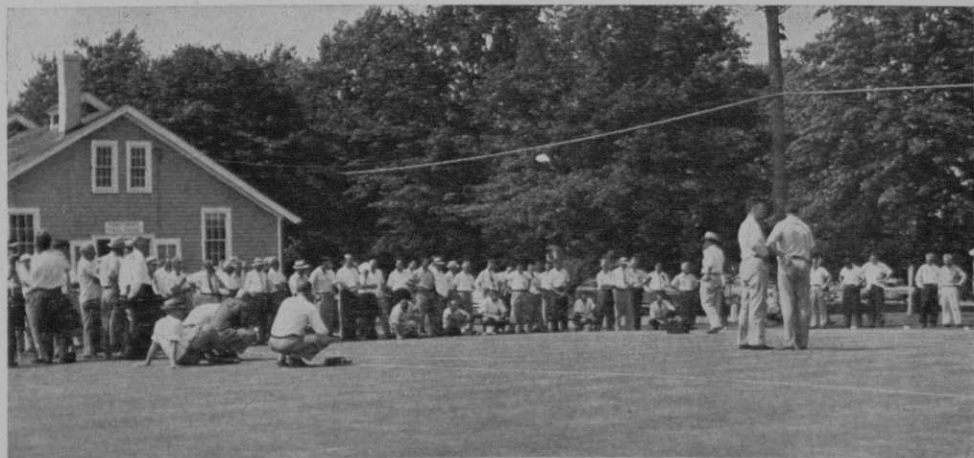
pected. We have kept this turf mowed at approximately $\frac{5}{8}$ in. except in the heat of the summer time when we raise up to $\frac{3}{4}$ in.

So much for the briefing and now for the problem. When hot windy weather arrives in June, July and August we watch the moisture content of our tees and greens like hawks and sometimes find it necessary to water greens and tees at least every other day and sometimes every day. When this same condition applies to the fairway turf there is little we can do about it as it requires at least three nights to water the fairways only once. How then can we expect to keep not only poa but how about the bent? We can not. Consequently we lose turf and blame it all on the poa not being able to take the heat.

We do not lose the poa on our greens or tees because we have a moisture control but on the fairways I am stymied when I know moisture is needed to keep the turf from wilting and yet we cannot possibly cover more than about six fairways in one night.

When turf needs moisture after or before a day of high temperature and drying wind it must have it now and not two or three days later. I believe that if we are going to continue to try to grow bent fairways that have to be cut close we also have to make provisions to irrigate them in the same manner that we do for greens and tees. This means that we must increase the capacity of our irrigation systems so that we can water all of the fairways in one night. With such facilities we would lose very little poa and bent except a small proportion

STUDYING EXPERIMENTAL PLOTS AT RUTGERS UNIV.



Group attending Rutgers Field Day at New Brunswick, N. J. Turf specialists on hand for the meet included O. J. Noer, Milwaukee Sewerage Commission; Dr. Jesse DeFrance, Rhode Island Exp. Station; Dr. Fred V. Grau, Dir., USGA Green Section and Dr. Gilbert Ahlgren and Ralph Engel of Rutgers University.

through disease from unexpected causes.

I am not alone in this opinion as Ray Didier of Chicago's Tam O'Shanter club has already accomplished just what I am proposing. He has increased his irrigation capacity to where he can water the entire course in 14 hours, if necessary.

Does this theory conflict with the trend toward the use of less water in turf management as proven by our university research and the research of the USGA? No, I don't believe it does. Because if we can water all of the course in one night we could then use more frequent but less application of water.

As it is today we must start watering fairways about the next night after a shower in order to get around all of them in several nights. Where with greens and tees we can wait until they are in need and then give them what they require.

Fairway turf is maintained completely different today from what it was 15 to 20 years ago, as to type of grasses and height of cut but we have not taken the necessary steps to keep up the facilities for the management of this turf as applies to irrigation. We are sure now that the players want a tight close turf for fairways and it will be up to us to see that they get it.

Common Turf Problems Persist

By LEONARD J. STRONG
Supt., Saucun Valley Country Club
Bethlehem, Pa.

The most important course maintenance problem in our part of the country, from the strictly turf viewpoint, is the infestation of poa annua, crabgrass and clover.

This has been the case since the modern standards of golf course were developed and every year these same turf problems confront the superintendents although various remedies and maintenance procedures are employed in the search for the right answers. There is no question but that continued research is necessary on these problems and must have high rating on the research programs.

One method found successful in checking crabgrass has proved to be much too expensive for average golf course use on large areas such as fairways. Another method used is the elimination of the seed by chemical treatment over a long period but this is a long-drawn-out process. This method is being applied to poa annua as well as to clover and crabgrass. The player pressure on superintendents and the research men is to get a quick cure for every trouble.

This past season, being the worst experienced in many years, presented a number of turf problems in addition to

those previously mentioned. The problems included brownpatch, dollar spot, melting out, copper spot, pink spot, pythium, helminthosporium and other diseases which are still unnamed.

In this section the superintendents have been having a busy fall renovating and putting their courses back into shape. In most cases they have been aerifying, spiking, seeding and fertilizing with hopes of a good growing fall to complete the job and have first-class turf for next year.

The theoretical aim of the superintendent is to discover maintenance procedures and preventive measures that will eliminate the problems to which the finely conditioned golf course seems to be heir, and to simplify maintenance to operations required for careful grooming. But with the uncertainties of weather, the mysteries of soil and plant growth, and the exacting demands of golfers upon one of the most peculiar jobs in scientific agriculture, there'll always be many problems in golf turf.

About the best we can do is to stay determined, thoughtful and diligent in trying to solve some of the most common problems which continue to plague us year after year.

Study the Limiting Factors

By WILLIAM LYONS
Supt., Firestone Rubber Company Courses
Akron, O.

The major and very difficult problem in golf course maintenance is that of discovering and adopting good maintenance practices that will reduce some costs so on the same budget more money can be allotted to hiring well qualified people.

The superintendent is hard pressed between higher labor costs and trying to keep the cost of golf low.

We are in a business. We have set our sights high with respect to the quality of our production. We must compete in the labor market for good labor. We must match business and industry if we are to command respect in and for the profession of golf course maintenance. And certainly in solving the problems that now confront the superintendent we will be able to say that we have exercised a type of business thinking that deserves respect.

In our thinking we have to study every phase of the course and of maintenance operations. One can't stay in this demanding profession on grandpa's methods now any more than a farmer can produce profitable crops with grandpa's antiquated methods. In modern farming I have to look at every problem with an idea of finding the limiting factor that

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ment. Dr. John C. Harper, III, working under the second Green Section Turf Research Fellowship, finished his work in June and, to the best of our knowledge, was the only Ph.D. in Turf Management produced in 1952. The new fellow is Miles F. Nelson. We sincerely believe that he will carry on the high ideals set by Jim Watson and Jack Harper. Musser's work with Merion breeder seed, polycross creeping bent, polycross creeping red fescue, and various management practices will be of value to turf people everywhere.

Rhode Island continues to grind out the data for the Northeast. DeFrance has some new bulletins on crabgrass control and weed-free seed beds. Now he is working on Merion bluegrass establishment and management, with a weather eye cocked for combination turf with warm-season perennials (Meyer zoysia, to be exact). The roadway traffic trials will prove to be mighty interesting.

At Tifton, Georgia, there is the greatest array of plots of warm-season grasses anywhere in the country. The latest development is Tifton 127 bermuda for putting greens — a cross between African bermuda and Tifton 57 bermuda. This grass looks and acts in a manner similar to bent grass. Dr. Forbes, now working with Dr. Burton, is continuing his studies with zoysia grasses which look more promising than ever before. Some of Forbes crosses appear to have a great future. Centipede seed has become available as a result of the cooperative work between the Tifton Station and the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and the Green Section. The real way to see the results of the work at Tifton, or at any other Station, is to attend a Turf Field Day.

Rutgers University, under Dr. Ralph Engel's direction, is conducting practical trials of management of bents, fescues, and bluegrasses. Attention is being given to the warm-season grasses in an effort to discover through research, their place in New Jersey's turf areas. The Green Section has furnished U-3 bermuda-grass and Meyer zoysia to the New Jersey Station for the cooperative work.

At Purdue we find studies covering a wide range of subjects, including bents, fescues, bluegrasses, a putting green in use on the campus, warm-season grasses combined with Merion bluegrass, crabgrass control, clover control, fungicide studies, and more. Dr. William Daniel is to be commended for his pioneering spirit and his courage to pursue the new concepts.

We cannot describe the work at each station but we do want to express deep appreciation for the excellent work in soils and irrigation at the University of California; the soils work at Stillwater, Oklahoma; the bermuda selections and bent

studies at Texas A. & M.; the weed and disease control at Ames; the studies of warm-season and cool-season combinations at the University of Kentucky; turf management studies at Michigan State College; and trials of species and strains at Middleburg, Virginia. Encouraging signs are beginning to come from Ohio and North Carolina suggesting that Turf Management is being considered as a part of the agricultural program in those states.

In reviewing the great job of research that men in turf are doing it becomes increasingly clear that, to make that research most valuable, we need (1) coordination on a national basis, and (2) a more effective Extension Service. Too, we need an expanded teaching program. In short, all three phases must go forward together. The big question now is, "Who can best accomplish the job of National Coordination on a continuing basis? When we have the answer to that one our total efforts will be infinitely more effective.

(To be continued in the January, 1953, issue of *Golfdom*)

COURSE PROBLEMS SURVEYED

(Continued from page 40)

determines maximum crop production. As a golf course superintendent I must think along the same line of approach to solving the problem. For instance:

How are we going to feed greens a balanced plant food with the temperature near 90 and a foursome at every green every six minutes?

The answer, in meeting the limitations, was to use soluble fertilizer and spray it on with a power sprayer.

The results: 21 greens fed in 2½ hours by six men, at a total labor cost of \$28.16. The fertilizer cost was \$2.31 per green. There was no burning, no inconvenience to players. By studying weather information we can feed at the right time and actually reduce disease incidence according to our experience this past season when we only had to apply fungicides five times.

In the above operation we had almost \$4000 in machinery. Was it worth while? We have been using the machine for the past six years. We had 50 lbs. pressure at the hose end at every green. Our river water system is nearly 25 years old.

Always the pay-off in course maintenance is results, even though some of the determining factors are beyond the control of the superintendent. To decide what is within your control takes cautiously thoughtful experimentation and confidence in your decision.

I've been through that, too — as many other superintendents have been. After

the criticism I took from some because of an article "Softening Hard Greens" I wrote for GOLFDOM I might have shied away from expressing myself in print any more. But the results of the "816" sanding continue to bring only one complaint from our players—"Too much grass on the greens"—and the practice has been adopted with satisfaction by some of the earlier critics in course maintenance work, so can I doubt the wisdom of a practice that again has been successful during a very harsh season?

The results, this year, of the sanding procedure:

Up to 425 players a day on greens as small as 2500 sq. ft. Cups changed four times a week. No worn spots from heavy traffic.

Greens are washed and mowed seven days a week.

Sprinklers were on our public course greens (which is built on gravel) fewer than 10 nights, up to Sept. 12. Sprinklers were used on our private course greens fewer than five nights. On the savings in labor and water the "816" sanding has had a cash value to us this year of \$36 a ton.

Greens held even the lofted approaches of the 100-shooters. The customer satisfaction on our public course has been recorded by the cash register. On our private course the members are bragging about "our greens."

Soil samples show water is getting down and so are the grass roots.

Superintendents Plan for Atlantic City, Feb. 10-12

Details of exhibition space for the 24th National Turf Conference and equipment and supply exhibition of the Golf Course Superintendents' Assn. of America, have been released by the organization's sec., Agar M. Brown, PO Box 106, St. Charles, Ill.

The convention will be held at Ambassador hotel, Atlantic City, Feb. 10, 11, 12. Booths range in price from \$90 to \$216. Allotments are made on first-come, first-served basis.

The program committee, headed by Ed Casey, Supt., Baltusrol GC, Short Hills, N. J., and Brown, is working out a schedule to balance turf technical subjects and matters of golf course management. The GCSA during its 27 years has mainly devoted its formal programs to technical phases of turf development and maintenance, even when no conventions were held during some war years.

Results have been highly satisfactory to all concerned in improving standards of golf course maintenance. But of recent years the labor supply, financial, officials' and golfers' relations, and other executive

and management problems have become so pressing that a timely division of program subjects has been dictated.

As is very plainly shown in this issue of GOLFDOM the technical problems of the superintendents are as much under control as well organized research and its intelligent application permit, but the problems of management which depend on understanding and cooperation of officials and members are urgent and serious puzzles which must receive attention.

SE PGA Combines Play with Work; Cochrane Re-elected

Southeastern PGA, holding annual meeting at Memphis showed club-wielding skill in tournament played over Chickasaw's beautiful course. After being rained out first day the tournament proceeded with slim Charley Harper, Ft. Benning, Ga., with 11-under par, 277, leading the circuit star Cary Middlecoff by 6 strokes. Doc turned over his second place check of \$400 to the charity which sponsored the tournament. Joe Taylor, Pat Abbott, Broyles Plemmons, Dick Beckman, and Scuddy Horner, followed the leaders.

George Dawson, Spalding's VP in charge of sales, spoke on pro business operations; Robert Bruce Harris, golf architect of Chicago, talked on course design for interesting playability and economical maintenance; and Harold Sargent, national PGA treas., discussed pro problems in the business sessions.

Election of SE NGA officers was held.

Johnny Cochran, Greenwood, Miss., was renamed pres. Leo Beckman was re-elected sec.-treas., and Harold Sargent, treas., national PGA, was re-chosen honorary pres.

Vice-president from each of the six states in the SE PGA are: Tom Lundy, Mississippi; Denny Champagne, Florida; Joe Harper, Alabama; John Livingstone, Georgia; Charlie Danner, Tennessee, and Everett Nelson, Louisiana.

CORRECTION

A serious error in the table listing cost of materials used in connection with the article "Overseeding with Bent Helps Solve Texas Greens Problem," which appeared on page 46 of the September, 1952 issue is called to your attention to prevent possible serious damage. Third line from the bottom of the table which reads, "30 lbs. Calo-Clor Fungicide @ 4.95 /lb. \$188.50" should read, 3 lbs. of Calo-Clor Fungicide at \$4.95 per lb. or \$14.85. — The Editor.