

Woes of Men and Weather

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My first reaction to the question "What do you think is the most important problem that faces golf course maintenance?" was and still is the labor situation. The shortage of labor has come to the point now where you do not look for good hard working men—you just look for anybody. And you hire them, hoping they will fit into your program and will work out well. If not, they are weeded out and you hope someone else will turn up next week.

A few years ago eight to ten men would come around each Spring looking for work, but not true today. This Spring I had one man looking for work and he is 72 years old.

Like most of the other courses in New Jersey we have had to resort to high school and college boys. That works out fine during the few summer months but then in the Spring and Fall, when you have just as much if not more work to do, you are down to a skeleton crew and something has to be neglected. This labor situation is becoming more and more serious every year and unless we do something about it we are going to find ourselves with more and more work and fewer and fewer men. You can have all of the power-driven equipment in the world but unless you have someone to operate it, it is of no use.

The comparatively low rate of pay and seasonal work offered by golf courses just does not have any appeal to a person who has to pay 19 cents for a loaf of bread. How can we help overcome this problem? By offering a decent living wage, pleasant working conditions, and above all to guarantee year-round work. We may not be able to compete with military establishments or industrial wages but if we can offer a man the security of a year-round pay check it would go a long way in acquiring a good and honest crew. Those courses that seem to have the least labor problems are those that retain a crew, or at least a nucleus of a crew, 12 months of the year. If you can have at least three-fourths of your crew to fall back on all year around and then hire your summer help from the young school fellows you are in much better shape than depending almost entirely on seasonal workers. Over the years your golf course will show the results of this plan—there is nothing like having experienced or regular men on your payroll. Thus to

me, the most important problem on a golf course is labor.

Always A Summer Tougher

In regard to the problems on turf in our area, this past season there have been plenty. And the main cause for all these headaches, heartaches, grey hairs and worrying frowns has been the weather. Whenever we go through a bad season like 1949 we think that we have seen the worst, but then there is always another summer to come rolling around that is a little tougher. Such has been the summer of 1952 and from all reports it has been unfavorable to courses all over the nation. We had a very cool and wet Spring with grass responding very poorly, especially the root development. Then in June we immediately jumped into summer with temperatures soaring to 90° and above. July was hot and humid with 17 days having temperatures of 90 or above and then 13 of those days were in succession. August was somewhat cooler but wet. We seemed to have the extremes this season and golf courses suffered likewise. Some had an immense amount of trouble while others seemed to hold on and come through.

On many courses sections or whole greens passed out of the picture and there were very few of the boys who did not have trouble of some kind on their course during the summer. It was also a beautiful year for diseases (the pathologist was in his glory) and required diligent watching and regular spraying of fungicides. And what a banner year of crabgrass! *Poa annua* disappeared and the turf grasses weakened so all old man crabgrass had to do was germinate. Thus this just added insult to injury and made the superintendent stoop a little lower under all of his problems.

Reducing the Trouble

Those courses that had the least amount of trouble during this severe season were those that watched their fertilization carefully; watered even more carefully; applied fungicide when needed; tubular-tined dry spots, or even aerified sections or whole greens; and in general kept a careful watch over all maintenance practices. During June, July and August we fertilized every two or three weeks but only in small amounts.

Hand watering on many courses was the only solution in keeping greens from passing out. Even though we had heavy

rains of 2 or 3 inches in a few days the grass would wilt, due to drying winds and short root development, and required light watering although there was plenty of moisture in the soil. We applied fungicide as often as twice in one week and then again went three weeks without applying any. For a while during the summer we spiked our greens weekly and then even had to go out and tubular-tine the knolls and aerify the edges to keep them from drying out.

The fairways also suffered considerable throughout our area this summer. Those who had good grasses in their fairways and could water them fared the best. Our tees, along with those on many other courses, took a beating this season due to the play and weather. We are now in the process of renovating them to get them in shape for next summer. Let's hope that it will not be "one of the worst summers you have ever experienced."

Sports Pages Telling Course Maintenance Story

Golf course condition and maintenance operations have been getting good space as live sports page news during the past two years. Sports editors and writers have recognized that course supts. have stories of interest and information to all golfers.

Supts. also have been getting feature publicity on garden pages in recent years and are in heavy demand for spring lectures at garden clubs on lawn care.

An example of how interviewing a course supt. brings out a sports page feature appeared in the Greensboro (NC) Record where sportswriter Adrian Brodeur wrote:

Ever wonder how much work and exactly what procedure is followed in making a new golf green? Take it from A. D. Edwards, Green Valley Golf Club superintendent, it's plenty of work and there's a hard pattern to follow.

Green Valley, newest course in the Gate City, will soon join the ranks of the city's other four when it officially becomes an 18-hole course in Spring. Work started months ago on an additional nine holes and work was just completed a few days ago on the planning and seeding of green grass.

Green Valley's new nine greens will be the city's biggest greens. This claim was made by Edwards who said they would almost double the size of the present nine greens at Green Valley.

"I doubt very much if a golfer will ever get the same putt to a cup twice in one year," Edwards said.

"We are going to have a lot of cup

space on these new greens and every inch of the new green will be available for cupping."

That's quite a claim since many greens have large areas, because of rolls and pitches in the greens, where cupping is impossible. But while the new Green Valley greens will include pitches and rolls, they will still be suitable for cupping purposes.

After plans for the size of the greens were formulated in the Starmount offices, Edwards and his crew went to work preparing the greens for next Spring's play. Seven of the new nine greens will be a texture of the fine Hall's Bermudagrass. The other two will be a combination of the Hall's grass and Tift bermuda, an imported fine grass from Florida.

Source of the expensive Hall's bermuda came right from Green Valley. Last year Edwards made a huge new practice green out of the famous Hall grass. In the past 12 days he has taken out 51,000 2-in. plugs out of the practice greens.

Using a special tool, made by West Point Products Corp., which cuts a perfectly round 2-in. plug, Edwards and his crew of eight dug up the 51,000 Hall plugs and then dug up 51,000 more plugs of topsoil on the greens where the Hall plugs were to be placed. The plugs were placed in the holes 6 in. apart over the entire surface of the greens. Within a few weeks time the new greens will be covered, not thick but covered, with stringers from these plugs.

Hall's bermuda doesn't have a seed. It has to be transplanted and that is a tremendous task. Eight men and boys aided in the vast job of digging the plugs and plug holes.

The reason for two of the greens to contain a mixture of Hall's bermuda and the Tift type is of an experimental nature. If it is successful golfers will have two of the finest greens in the city. While Hall's bermuda is fine in itself, the combination of these two grasses should provide an even finer putting surface.

Cotton Writes Helpfully in "My Swing"

Henry Cotton, one of the world's greatest students of golf playing technique as well as playing star and a clear writer has written "My Swing" which is published by Country Life, Ltd., 2-10 Tavistock st., London, WC2, Eng. It sells for \$4.

It's a most informative combination of picture and text analysis and instruction and is certain to have interested and extensive reading in the U.S. as well as in Britain. Cotton brings a keen freshness into golf shot-making analysis.