

Fierce Summer Shows Course Needs

Until July the nation's golf courses generally were in almost perfect condition. Superintendents hoped they'd be able to minimize the normal troubles of hot, humid weather.

Then, in most sections—with welcome exceptions mostly in the southeast and Rocky Mountain states—all hell broke loose.

By skill and constant vigilance the damage of severely unfavorable weather was kept restricted although not to the extent desired by supts. and players. Some veterans said that definitely the disaster period demonstrated the value of the turf research programs. Without the background and knowledge developed by the superintendents' programs of study of the technicalities of turf maintenance havoc would have been extensive and more lasting.

Two factors were tremendous handicaps to the superintendents: Faulty construction of greens and inadequate and indifferent labor.

Troublesome greens showed defects of construction done years ago when builders didn't know any better and were constructing cheaply on sharply competitive bids. Poor design for drainage also figured as a greens headache last summer and accentuated the architects' problem of combining golfing requirements with maintenance requirements.

In a few districts the golf course labor situation was reasonably good. Generally though, superintendents reported that most of their course labor was bottom-of-the-barrel personnel as jobs in industry with better pay, year-around employment with paid vacations, insurance, etc., provided competition that few golf clubs could—or would—meet in getting competent and dependable employees.

Blame Supts. Then Second Guess

When the abnormal weather did ravage courses the first impulse of players, of course, was to fire superintendents. But quickly that mood passed as golfers got

around and found that other courses were also suffering. Nothing was said, of course, about unreasonable demands of players accounting for some serious maintenance troubles.

Despite the bad weather and its damage superintendents say that play was up a bit. Their estimates checked closely with the pros' observations of a 5 per cent increase over last year's rounds played.

Although floods damaged many courses the opposite story—drought—probably was more frequently the cause of trouble to courses last summer. As a result, numerous courses are planning to drill new wells and install modern watering systems.

Loss of poa annua continued to be the headache at a great many courses and there's no sure cure in sight.

Supts. Views Summarized

Highlights of the summer's problems, lessons and suggestions for research accent appear in comments made by prominent superintendents queried by GOLF-DOM.

MARSHALL E. FARNHAM, supt., Philadelphia (Pa.) CC—We had Bermuda-grass weather while we were trying to grow bentgrass. Changing climatic situation possibly is the controlling factor. Fairway fertilization usually is lower than it should be and is limited by budgets. Greatly to be desired would be construction practice that would prevent soil compaction and bent thatching.

EDWARD J. CASEY, supt., Baltusrol GC, Springfield, N. J.—Timing of operations to evaluation of weather influences is a big problem that is difficult to solve unless one has excellent and trustworthy labor available seven days a week. Displacement of poa annua with a good golf grass is a major need. Crabgrass control and disease control show improvement but are not yet at satisfactory levels. Fertilization, aeration, drainage, insect pest control and knowledge of soils show marked progress. Heavy play presents

many difficulties and added expense in maintenance routine and emergency work.

O. W. YOUNG, Moraine CC, Dayton, O.—Nobody knows yet how to keep the poa. We managed to keep greens in the summer in excellent condition, as did Jack Hart at NCR courses, and that means very little sleep during the fierce humid weather and with shortage of experienced help. At most courses, I guess, it's a delicate job to bring the course through a tough summer with heavy play of volunteer advisers on how to handle fine golf turf.

LEONARD STRONG, supt., Saucon Valley CC, Bethlehem, Pa.—Add a hurricane to an abnormally hot summer with drought and humidity alternating, then heaven help the superintendent. Poa annua, of course, went out. Helminthosporum, pythium and curvularia caused trouble and showed need of continued research but definite progress has been achieved. Weeds, including crabgrass; brownpatch and dollarspot are problems that have been at least partially solved.

JOHN PRICE, supt., Southern Hills CC, Tulsa, Okla.—We got through in pretty good shape with considerable help from fungicides. We had all known diseases and a few unknown. Water shortage caused loss of many trees and shrubs and brown fairways. Good results shown by Cohansey on what usually are our three worst greens, and at other courses in this district. More sand in topsoil on greens and steady advance in course maintenance knowledge are improving course conditions here. We need more water, and wise management of what water we can get. There's also decided need of more fertilization of fairways, tees and rough. Drainage problems are severe on older courses and tough enough on the newer ones. We also need better selection of grasses or selection of better grasses. Many maintenance problems would be lessened if club officials had clearer understanding of these problems.

COLIN SMITH, Shaker Heights CC, Cleveland, O.—Heat and humidity murdered us in this district. Clover and crabgrass control problems were partially solved but poa annua still is a puzzle and headache that has this district's supt. working hard trying to find the right answer.

OTIS E. OWENS, supt., Dallas (Tex.) CC — There is promise of simplifying greens problems with improved grasses.

Some of our city courses have gone to T35A Bermuda which is much better than the native Bermuda. We are trying Penn-cross and Pennlu which seem to be better than the old Seaside. Golf car use is causing plenty of maintenance problems. Some reconstruction may be required on greens that are extremely contoured and which have traps too close to greens for use of power equipment.

GEORGE L. LANPHERE, supt., Riviera CC, Pacific Palisades, Calif.—Southern California courses generally were in fine condition until August with its eight days of 100 plus temperature. Play this year was heavier than ever before. That increased problems of compaction on greens and in areas subjected to golf car travel. High temperature and humidity are problems we'll just have to live with. Drainage we probably can solve but with heavy play all available time of maintenance crews is taken and drainage and other construction jobs just have to wait. Poa annua went out on many courses; bent wasn't bothered. Aerification has eased some of our problems. Golfers have to learn that aerifying is a "must" and get reconciled to more frequent aerifying. We need a better year-around grass for tees. Soil testing to regulate watering and fertilizing programs has helped us in this section. Weed control has greatly improved. Budgets are certain to be higher in this area. Water rates have increased. Wages are increasing to golf course help or you can't get labor to maintain excellent course condition players and supts. want 365 days of the year. Golf courses' poor showing on wages and salaries in competition with other employers in Southern California is reflected by the difficulty many courses are having in getting superintendents and superintendents' serious difficulty in trying to get capable course labor.

CHARLES B. LUDECKER, supt., Brookfield CC, Clarence, N. Y.—After a cold wet spring, which produced a bumper crop of poa annua, we had 54 days with no rain and 74 days before a real soaker fell. High temperatures and humidity brought heavy attacks of fungus diseases. Shortage of water for watering systems. Play up about 20 per cent, with women's play especially heavy. Improved water management, intelligent use of chemical controls of weeds, diseases, insects, better understanding of fertilizing needs and application, saved courses from being ruined by a terrible stretch of weather.

Golf car and bag cart traffic has created additional problems requiring more work and money for turf maintenance. Poor drainage, bad course construction for machine maintenance, changed playing requirements and heavier play call for considerable reconstruction on this area's courses. Course maintenance problems aggravated by shortage of good summer labor. Building and factory employment heavy in this district and paying a great deal more than is paid for golf course work.

JAMES L. HAINES, Denver (Colo.) CC — With exception of considerable loss of poa annua, condition usually was very good on courses in this district despite heat and drought. Improvements in watering practice and in weed and clover control showed well. Some reconstruction is needed to improve contours around greens and to make possible greater use of machine maintenance. Rising costs are making higher budgets inevitable.

ROBERT M. WILLIAMS, supt., Beverly CC, Chicago, Ill. — Watered fairways took a bad beating in the Chicago district. There were 43 days over 90 degrees and with high humidity. If this is to be normal Chicago district summer weather perhaps we're due for a return to bluegrass fairways. Poa annua control is still the big problem. Greens fared reasonably well except where not getting good water and air drainage. Watering practice calls for more attention. Many irrigation systems in Chicago district have about worn out or are inadequate for present needs. Disease control, clover control, improved fertilization, weed control, aerification, new grass strains and improved equipment showed on the good side of the ledger last summer. There are needed methods and materials for control of poa annua, crabgrass control in large areas, disease control on fairways and control of pythium, anthracnose and other of the less common diseases. Good part-time help is available in industrial areas now.

WM. LYONS, supt., Firestone Tire & Rubber courses, Akron, O. — Very few courses around here were in condition desired by the supts. The grasses we've got need delicate, constant and expert nursing to stand weather like last summer's. We're showing some progress with better greens grasses such as Pennlu, better tees with U3 Bermuda and zoysia, and more informed use of water, fertilizer and fungicides. Our problems urgently needing attention are fairway renovation, nematode

control, course alterations to spread bag cart wear. Budgets are due for an increase as labor and supply costs are up and all the golfers want top maintenance.

JACK GORMLEY, Supt., Wolferts Roost CC, Albany, N. Y. — We couldn't have had worse weather conditions than we had in this district after June. Play was heavier than normal. Golfers want turf conditions that subject grass to more disease and damage than most golf turf can naturally and reliably withstand. Drought condition here was aggravated by artificial water shortage. Large brownpatch damage, scald and helminthosporium accounted for a lot of damage. We escaped additional damage by correcting compaction by aerating, thatch removal, careful watering and plugging with improved strains of grass. Fairway watering modernization and adequate help to keep on every detail of the job in threatening weather are needed generally in this district.

EMIL H. PICHA, supt., Oak Ridge CC, Hopkins, Minn. — This golf year was the longest and biggest in this area that I've seen in my 35 years here. It was about the toughest season on the supts. Course condition was mostly good until mid-August and the end of a long hot spell alternating humidity and dryness. We had large brownpatch and dollarspot pretty well under control. Weeds and earthworms also no longer are the baffling problems they used to be. We've learned a lot about getting and keeping good turf by fertilizing instead of by reseeding. Aerifying has solved the compaction problem. What is needed at numerous courses in this district are hoseless watering systems, course alteration for economy of good maintenance by machinery, the answer to the nematode problem, and some way of reducing costly maintenance of sand traps. Except where the course condition has slipped budgets probably will be about the same next year as this year.

MICHAEL J. O'GRADY, supt., Country Club of New Bedford, Mass. — Most of the courses in this territory are from 27 to 40 years old and often not prepared by grass strains or original construction to withstand such unusual factors as 27 days of heat in the high 90s and low water supply. The application of turf research and what the superintendents have learned at their conferences and sectional meetings were life-savers for courses in New England this year. Hurricane damage at some courses was severe and added

course maintenance problems that were handled by near-miracles performed by superintendents. Many of the New England maintenance problems could be solved by modernizing course construction and with use of the improved types of grass but the golfers hesitate to allot time from course use for this work although the modernizing undoubtedly would be economical in the long run, as well as elevating the pleasure of play. Informed chairmen and superintendents estimate that increased costs of supplies and machinery and the necessity of raising wages to get and keep labor that has desirable efficiency, intelligence and reliability, will account for about a 25 per cent increase in 1956 budgets.

GEORGE RAMSDEN, supt., Shaker Ridge CC, Loudonville, N. Y. — Extreme heat and drought resulted in passing out of many grasses, especially around greens collars and tees. Terrific influx of weeds. Melting out of greens in afternoons was prevented only by hand watering. Fortunately we've advanced in correcting compaction by aeration, in better control of fungus disease and in weed and crabgrass control, and with some improved grass strains, or most courses last summer would have been in horrible shape. We still are learning about handling greens under extreme conditions, about watering and weed control but certainly showed last summer the value of the knowledge we have acquired. We may be in for a bad weather cycle and to strengthen courses as well as to meet increased costs of men and material are going to have to get higher budgets for 1956.

JAMES E. THOMAS, supt., Army Navy CC, Arlington, Va. — After the Fourth of July weather troubles hit courses in this area hard. In September the courses started to recover. Where air and water drainage was good the damage was minimized. Water management of the right sort paid big dividends. Turf research possibly justified its expense for the past five or six years by its application this summer. Without what we've learned in recent years about turf management the summer probably would have meant widespread and costly loss of turf. Most of the damage was kept restricted and temporary. Reconstruction for more machine maintenance is necessary at many courses. Larger tees are required for heavier play. The increase in play alone would call for budget increases, even if machinery, supplies and labor costs would remain the

same next year as this — which they won't.

L. GALLET, supt., Claremont CC, Oakland, Calif. — This district's courses were in remarkably good condition this year, partially due to fairly favorable weather conditions and, we can say for our brother superintendents, sound and resourceful management practices. A great deal of our basic troubles seems to have been eliminated by making aerifying of greens and fairways a standard operating procedure of modern maintenance. Verti-cutting greens also has become common and has eliminated grain as well as dangerous thatch.

MIKE BONAVIDA, supt., Cypress Grove CC, Franklin, Va. — Bent green courses suffered considerable damage in this area the past summer. Heavy rains during two hurricanes had 50 per cent of the greens in this territory under water. Heat following the floods completed the damage. Recovery, following strenuous work by superintendents and their staffs, has been amazingly good. Greens have been put in better condition to withstand trouble, by aerifying and easier application of new fertilizers. Despite the setback of bad weather we had 30 to 40 per cent more play in this area than in 1954. We're going to have to do a good deal of work on drainage as courses in this territory are in low land.

NORMAN C. JOHNSON, supt., LaGorce CC, Miami Beach, Fla. — Course condition in this area was satisfactory this summer and promises to be excellent for winter play. Much attention is being given to use of improved grasses and to chemical weed eradication.

Managers Plan Convention for Los Angeles, Jan. 18-21

Club Managers Assn. of America will hold its 29th annual convention at Hotel Ambassador, Los Angeles, Jan. 18 thru 21.

Ashton Castle, chmn, Educational committee, and C. E. Errington, chmn., General Conference committee, have queried club managers on subjects the managers consider would be most valuable as conference topics.

The scope of the suggested list of subjects to be covered by addresses and discussions includes operation, management, personnel, more effectiveness of club managers' organizations, and the manager's own problems.