

How to Plan and Sell Fairway Renovation

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(Address at GCSA Conference)

WHEN we speak of fairway renovation, we think in terms of renewing and improving the turf surface; the change-over from unadapted grasses to grasses adapted for fairway play. Although we think in terms of changing over the turf cover, implied is the fact that we must correct whatever existing deficiencies there are and set up the required program of maintenance and management that will insure that the new turfgrasses will do what is expected of them.

For example, if some soils, seepage, or drainage problems exist, these must be first corrected. If nutrient level of any of the elements that we know are important to grass growth, such as levels of calcium, magnesium, phosphorous, or potash are limiting they must be corrected before any new cover can be expected to thrive. If the fairway in question reverted to weeds of one sort or another — the answers to why this happened must be resolved before any hope of establishing adapted grasses can be entertained.

There are some situations where every factor may be in order except grass selection. For example, Kentucky bluegrass and creeping red fescue which were used extensively in fairway seed mixtures in early days, have for the most part disappeared from fairways because of close mowing. In such cases renovation with a fairway grass would be in order.

The desires of the superintendent and the membership to renovate must be considered. We have made some progress in renovation techniques — today we have more "know how", improved grasses, better chemicals, improved equipment, and therefore more efficiency in getting the job done. Also, there is no question but that the standards of the game of golf are higher than those of yesteryear. Progress has been made in the golf turf field, and superintendents desire to modernize and incorporate new findings into their program at their individual clubs. Another important consideration is that members themselves request fairway improvement.

Today's golfer gets around more and sees more. He plays many different courses during the season; therefore, it is a natural question for him to ask why he can't have some of these things at his course. He hears of new herbicides performing a renovation job by eliminating weeds selectively and asks: "Why this can't be done at our course?" He hears of new grasses being established which afford greater playing pleasure. "Why can't we introduce these grasses at our course?" And so the subject of renovation of one sort or another is almost a continuous or endless cycle. You can't hold it against the membership for wanting to improve — in a sense this is the American way of life — keeping up with the Joneses! To want improvement is a natural desire; whether such improvements are feasible is a question that the superintendent must answer.

Survey Renovation Job

Should you renovate? Here are some thoughts for consideration. First, a survey of the areas to be renovated should be made; the degree of renovation should be determined, and a tentative cost estimate be drawn up. These are the material costs such as seed, chemicals, labor, and equipment depreciation. Material costs for the average fairway renovation task is usually quite nominal when pro-rated over a period of years. This fact serves to spur-on the renovation-minded members.

However before any program is undertaken, we feel these things are important.

(1) Will the members be informed of what is going on? In this respect, the superintendent might draw up a letter with the proposed renovation schedule so the members will know what to expect.

This brings to mind the similarity between some car drivers and some golfers who can be unkind, unthoughtful and inconsiderate at times. To cope with driver situation, the Road Commissions have devised a method of pacifying angry motorists — nothing fancy or elaborate, but simply a big sign posted along the roadside

(Continued on page 114)

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I do know more and more courses are being built at these bases both here and abroad. That means more and more of another segment of our population will be playing golf.

These facts alone coupled with the current increasing demands and pressure for more places to play far exceed the pace, encouraging as it is, at which we are moving today. If we are to catch up with the demand the pace must be accelerated for staggering as it may seem, it is nevertheless true.

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Planning and Selling Fairway Renovation

(Continued from page 92)

which, says "this road under construction. We apologize for the present condition of the road, and beg your indulgence while we make this improvement for you" . . . or words to that effect and as a result the sting of anger is somewhat subdued. You don't feel quite like the monster that you were prior to reading the sign. You begin to think that the people responsible for the present state of things may not be so bad after all. And so with the golfer, you must plant the thought before you plant the seed. If golfers are informed of what to expect, they will be better prepared, and thus will bear the inconvenience better.

(2) Will the membership stand behind the program of management necessary to keep the improved turfgrasses? This is of course a must, as renovation cannot be

entirely successful unless a program of management to suit the requirements of the particular grass is followed.

Weigh the Pro and Con

Like everything that we do we must weigh the good and bad features before proceeding. Let's review some of the bad features first:

(1) **Player aggravation.** We have already discussed this factor and have suggested a possible remedy — or at least a way to reduce complaints.

(2) **Player inconvenience.** The golfer normally wants no part of any practice that will interfere with his golfing pleasure. The intangible costs far outweigh the material costs of a renovation project. This could be a strong factor in the decision as to whether or not any renovation project takes place.

Ed Casey, Superintendent of Baltusrol GC, says, "To give too much weight to the intangible costs anchors one to a negative approach." In fairway renovation the intangible costs such as member reaction, success or failure, maintaining a weak situation, and interference with play can be a strong deterrent, and although it varies between clubs — a strong positive approach on the superintendent's part is necessary."

(3) **Time consumed in completing renovation project.** This factor could be either listed under good or bad features depending on the amount of time consumed to complete the project. If the rough work could be completed in reasonable time, weather conditions permitting, then much less weight can be attached to the interference factor. The many factors that enter into the timing of the project will be discussed separately under timing of renovation.

(4) **Heavy play on courses today.** Player

interference with work schedule.

(5) Renovation must be done in addition to regular maintenance and management practices. Normally, little if any extra help is provided when a new project is tackled. Therefore, care should be taken that only enough work be planned that could be carried to successful completion.

(6) Results sometimes are slow in showing.

Some of the good features of renovation follow:

(1) The conversion of grasses adapted for fairway play is the improvement that is most apparent, and is the criteria by which the members judge results.

(2) The improvements made in soils, drainage, and/or seepage are certainly good features of renovation.

(3) Player satisfaction and more playing pleasure as a result of introducing adapted grasses.

(4) Good efficiency of present day superintendents insures nominal material costs of renovation. Improved techniques, equipment, grasses, and chemicals insure this.

(5) Today it is possible, and preferable to keep area in play while renovation goes on. Players can continue their play uninterrupted by improving lies, until grass cover is satisfactory.

There are but a few techniques used in renovating — each have met with success, and the choice depends on personal preference. Some believe in the "scorched earth" policy, killing off all vegetation with cyanamid or sodium arsenite, or similar chemicals. Sherwood Moore, Supt., Hollywood CC, Deal, N.J., used this technique to good advantage at his club.

Light Weekly Treatment

William Sloan, Supt., North Shore CC in Glen Head, N. Y., prefers and has done a nice job with the technique of light weekly applications of sodium arsenite in renovation. In any event, whichever method is used, the chemical treatments should be followed by thorough aeration and dragging. The more soil that the seed comes in contact with the better the results will be. Lime and fertilizers should be applied at this time also — while the soil is open from the complete aeration.

One story by Casey points up the importance of thorough aeration prior to seeding. Last fall he scheduled the complete renovation of his 6th fairway on his lower course. The day on which the aeration was to take place happened to fall on

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a day when a monthly Superintendents' meeting was scheduled; therefore, Casey instructed his foreman to see that the aeration unit spend the full day on this No. 6 fairway. The foreman saw to it that Casey's instructions were carried out to the letter, and in Casey's words, upon his return: "I was scared by the appearance of the area — about 95% of the fairway was soil . . . we went ahead and seeded and fertilized, and the results have been most gratifying . . . the very best I've had in all my experience . . . the renovation work began the first week of September and by the last week of September a full cover was obtained."

Golfers played "winter rules" during this time. The area was kept in play all during the renovation project.

The time used by Casey to complete this project certainly was about as short a period that one could hope to successfully complete a job of this size. This points up the important factor — time within which the project is completed — if time consum-

ed is as short an interval as above, player inconvenience is a minor item.

The timing of the renovation project, and the time within which the project is completed are very important considerations. There is a right time and a wrong time to seed. In the Northeast, percentages are very much in our favor when we do a seeding job in the mid-August, mid-September period. There is less chance for failure due to weeds taking over and other such causes for failure — when seeding is timed right. Climatic conditions favor seed germination and turf establishment because of the cooler nights, heavy morning dew, and the usual late summer and fall rains that we experience at this time. In other areas where the warm-season grasses are encouraged, the timing is, of course, altered to establishment requirements of these grasses.

Selling the Renovation Program

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east usually meets with objections from the membership. The club championship matches have just about reached the half way mark and therefore players want to delay disturbing the grass or soil. Also the climate at this time is ideal for golf and normal play in this early period is usually quite heavy in the Northeast. Therefore, a good job of selling is required to convince the membership that the only time to renovate is the right time. The only program to follow is the right program. It is important to leave no stone unturned to insure success; plan every detail carefully; do every phase of the work thoroughly; leave nothing to chance. Success or failure in this project will determine to a large extent whether any other new projects of improvement will be undertaken.

We wish to re-emphasize the following points:

(1) Plan renovation thoroughly; time renovation at the right time, and keep length of time that it takes to complete project to a minimum.

(2) Don't take on more work than you can handle in one season. It is better to be conservative in planning amount of renovation to do in one season.

(3) Prepare membership for renovation projects by keeping them informed.

(4) Pursue the renovation plan vigorously — leave nothing undone that should be done.

(5) Initiate management and maintenance programs required to keep improvements of renovation.

Tam Prizes Total \$146,000

A combined cash purse of \$146,200 for this summer's World and All-American golf tournaments at Tam O'Shanter Country club have been announced by George S. May, the tourney's promoter. May also said his International cup matches will be discontinued.

The All-American on Aug. 2 thru 5 will offer \$25,000 to men pros and \$5,000 to women pros. The subsequent World meet, Aug. 9 thru 12, will pay out \$101,200 to the men and \$15,000 to the women.

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