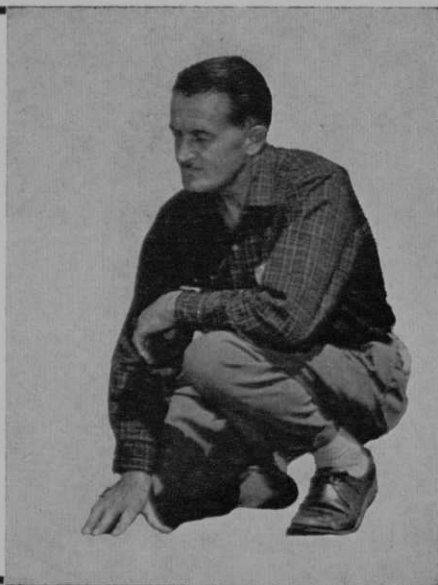


Grau's Answers to Turf Questions

If you've got a question you want Dr. Fred V. Grau to answer, please address it to Grau Q&A, Golfdom, 407 S. Dearborn, Chicago 5, Ill.



Open Course Policy Can Be Costly

“OUR POLICY is never to close the course.”

Many clubs have adopted this policy for better or for worse. It is not exactly popular with supts. They dread the foot-printing and the “pigpen” appearance around the cups on a fine bright Saturday in February after 100 golfers have played when there is a foot of ice below and two inches of thawed slush at the surface. They know that they will not be able to produce a true putting surface until well along in the summer.

Just the same, one supt. in Philadelphia told us recently: “The course belongs to the members. If they want to ruin the greens for a few hours of play at a time when the course really should be closed, all they have to do is tell me. They may have what they want. But, I insist that they allow me everything I need to repair the damage — even to completely resodding the greens — regardless of cost.”

In some cases, the supt. has full authority for closing. When that decision is made to preserve the course for the 400 members, the ten or a dozen who are disappointed can make more noise and bring more pressure than the other 390 who depend on the supt. to have perfect playing conditions, come spring. We cannot settle the debate but we feel sympathetic to the supt. who says, “The course is theirs. Just give me the tools, the grass, the fer-

tilizer and the labor so I can restore it before they see how badly they damaged it.”

Get the Tools

We know the soil will be compacted — but we have tools. Just make sure that the budget is big enough to give you all the tools you need. We know the surface will be rough — but we have sod nurseries and sod cutters and sterilized topsoil and fertilizers. Overnight, practically, we can resod so it will be better than before. Just don't be put in the position of having to correct the damage without everything that's needed.

Pro on Committee

In discussing things the other day with a topnotch supt. from Utah who has two sons who are professionals, the question arose: “Are there clubs where the pro might be a valuable member of the green committee?” We would like to hear some arguments for and against.

Some good reasons for: 1) He hears most of the gripes and some of the nice things the members say about the course. The supt. is not always in a position to catch player comments as they finish the round. 2) The pro knows how the course should play and can work with the supt. in maintaining the course for members who play. (In both respects the pro can be an excellent liaison between the supt. and members).

No Topdressing

Ten years ago we took a picture of a

green that had not been topdressed in 17 years. At the GCSA conference in Chicago we talked with this supt. again. He confirmed that there has been no topdressing now in 27 years. He says: "Why should I topdress? We have tools to do the job without topdressing — besides, why risk bringing in a lot of weed seeds, fungus spores, etc. Anyway, the members do not like the messiness — and I can keep them a lot happier without topdressing."

All Work, No Play

Enjoying himself at the conference in Chicago was a brawny supt. who seemed to be especially pleased to be there. He confided that this was the first time in three jobs and 27 years that he had been given a day off. Some chmn. have been asleep to let men become buried on the course without time for looking around a bit. We bet that this man will be taking some more days off again next year now that he has had a taste of hard-earned freedom. We'd like to believe that this is an isolated case.

Lack of Drainage

Recent visits to courses from coast to coast highlight one thing in particular — lack of drainage. We get more complaints from supts. on this score than any other, yet 30 years ago the necessity for good drainage was recognized and emphasized by supts., agronomists and professors. A new club is in such a hurry to get the course built and into play (so that revenue can start coming in) that they permit the builder to cut corners. The corner that seems to be cut most often affects drainage. If supts. were consulted there wouldn't be any question about installing perfect drainage. But — drain tile costs money. "Maybe we can get by this time and save all that dough." Little do they realize that, in the years to come, they will spend ten times what they "saved" and still not have what they want and need. Quite often the "saving" winds up in a complete rebuilding program at heavy expense.

What is the answer? Where do we go from here? Every architect is thoroughly familiar with the need for, and the benefits of, good drainage. What is the factor that permits new courses to be built on heavy soil with no drainage under the greens? It is puzzling. It is something like courses where the turf is poor because it is starving for nitrogen. When we recommend the feeding program that will feed the grass properly to produce good dense playing turf, the question arises, "What



This power driven bunker rake is used by Supt. Nelson Monical at Portage CC, Akron, O. Monical designed the rake. *Grau photo*

will it cost?" Many times the reaction is, "Oh, we can't afford that." We have heard the statement more than once, "If they can't afford to feed the turf properly, they really can't afford to have a course." Maybe drainage fits into the same category. They say they can't afford it, yet they will spend ten times the cost trying to grow grass under an insurmountable handicap, only to find that they have to rebuild and install a drainage system anyway, dozens of ruined greens later.

Too Much Peat

Q. Our club is making long range plans for improving the course. We intend to plant trees, locate new traps and improve greens. One of the problems is the first green. It has too much peat in it, and as a result, is wavy and hard to mow. Our plan is to remove the sod this fall and prepare a better base for the green. Would you let us know how we should go about this and what soil base preparation should be made before replacing the sod? (Ill.)

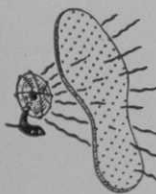
A. In answer to your question I ask a question. Is the sod good enough to strip, lay aside and then replace? If not, this would be an excellent chance to introduce an improved type of bent.

After the sod is stripped, it probably would be a good idea to strip off completely all the objectionable soil, pile it off the site of the green and then check the drainage system. If tile drainage is not adequate, be sure that the drainage system is completely adequate before replacing any soil.

If the soil that you have removed from the
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Grau's Answers

(Continued from page 66)

green is usable, add sand, coarse sand of course, and some clay loam soil, if it is indicated, to the mixture so that when thoroughly blended you have a sandy loam type of soil with about 8-10% of clay and 60-70% of coarse sand. This would be my guide for preparing the soil before replacing it over an adequate drainage system; 10-12 inches of this mixture, preferably 12, loose measure, should be replaced and thoroughly settled before replacing sod. Some supts. actually tread the green to be sure that the soil is firm and to avoid settling and creation of pockets after the sod has been replaced.

By all means, incorporate whatever limestone is indicated by the test, plus a generous amount of a complete fertilizer, preferably one containing slow-release nitrogen for the benefit of the sod when it is replaced.

Finding Qualified Men

Q. Our club recently purchased a 9-hole course and expects to operate it on a daily fee basis. None of us has had any technical experience in the operation or maintenance of a course and we need capable and conscientious men to perform the necessary work.

Is there any standard wage scale or man-hour and manpower averages which we may apply in order to obtain satisfactory results? We would be happy to receive or subscribe to any literature which might be helpful to us in this new venture. There seems to be a scarcity of qualified persons and the former owner, who did all the work practically single-handed, is not available. (New York)

A. I suggest, first, that you locate and retain a qualified supt. to operate the course and to keep it in tip-top condition so that it will attract players.

I know of no standard wage scale or averages that you could apply in order to obtain satisfactory results. It will be necessary for you to pay the supt. a salary and other benefits that will attract the kind of man that will give you the kind of course you want. As far as labor on the course is concerned, it will be necessary to meet the wage scale of local industry.

Poa Annua in Bentgrass

Q. What will kill Poa Annua without hurting bentgrass? (Texas)

A. There is nothing we can recommend that will kill poa annua and not hurt the bentgrass. Arsenate of lead is one of the better materials to use to discourage poa annua gradually. The rate of application is 10 lbs. to 1,000 sq. ft. applied early in the spring and repeated once or twice a year until results are achieved.

It would help if I knew first, what kind of grass you have on the greens; second, the kind of soil in the greens and also the drainage and, third, your fertilizer and watering practices. With a description of these factors a better diagnosis could be made.

(Continued on page 88)

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Clover in Greens

Q. Last year our greens were wonderful until late Sept. when I noticed an abundance of clover patches show up. I was told our greens needed lime, but I thought lime would encourage clover. I treated most of the summer with fungicides, fertilized with natural organic and top-dressed with a rich peat moss soil twice last year.

Please advise if you know what I can do to discourage clover. We had our greens tested in early spring and they tested on three different greens — 6.7, 6.9 and 7.0. I felt that the latter two were O. K. for pH. Would you suggest agricultural limestone in this matter or something else? We have several different types of bent due to so many changes in supts. and committees, so I cannot tell exactly what types we have the most of. (Ohio)

A. I disagree with the person who told you that you need lime. The pH values which you quote are O. K. — no lime for the present.

Clover invades because — (1) the clover is there, (2) competition from the grass is not there. Some of the grasses in your greens may be "weak sisters" that just naturally get thin in the summer. There may have been some disease that was not checked in time and the weakened grass let the clover in.

Now that you have the clover, I would suggest that you eliminate it soon as possible with Brushkiller, a mixture of 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T. Use it at ½ the rate recommended for clover control on fairways. Repeat as needed.