

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.



Interference

MOST words have more than one meaning. The word, Interference, is no exception. In addition to several definitions there are a number of connotations which affect meaning. The choice of the word was not made blindly. Everyone is aware of the effects of interference in many of the operations on golf courses.

"To take part in the concerns of others" is one of the best known definitions of our word. Another way to say it is "butting in." Many of the troubles of the supt. stem from this phase of interference. In a way it is giving advice before it is asked. Sometimes it comes from well meaning members who have not been taught that suggestions to the supt. should come thru the green chmn. who can screen them for their value. In a few cases there has been interference from the chmn. who may not have been "chairmaning" enough or who has not had adequate instructions on the scope of the position, to permit the supt. to run his operations his own way according to an agreed program. Fortunately these cases are few and far between.

Minimizing the Evil?

One way to minimize interference is to operate more machines so that a given job can be completed in less time. We make this suggestion broad because it can be interpreted in several directions. One machine requires X hours to complete a job. Two machines should be able to do the

work in one-half X time. There is a limit as to how far one can go in this direction. We hope that no one ever will attempt to make one machine do the work in half the time by operating it at twice the speed. We shudder to contemplate the results.

We have seen fertilizing programs developed that have the possibility of contributing to conflicts. This Q & A department has reviewed some that were dillies. Workmen were applying something every week during the playing season. By contrasts, some feeding programs are in operation that would offer opportunity for conflict only twice or three times a year on the greens and tees and once a year on fairways. Some of the recent scientific discoveries in the field of grass nutrition have real possibilities for minimizing interference.

It Can't Be Avoided

Frequent applications of fungicides sometimes are necessary to stop the spread or attack of a vicious fungus. Almost without exception these operations involve the use of heavy equipment which, in a way, tend to "clutter" the course. There isn't any good way to hide a 300-gal. sprayer when the course is crowded. The point that we are reaching is this: Any device or operation that can reduce disease and thereby make it unnecessary to resort to frequent control sprays will aid in reducing interference. One of the ways is water control. "Dry grass is healthy grass." Deep watering at longer intervals can aid in maintaining a dry surface which is very

helpful in minimizing disease. Good drainage is another device which helps in water control and definitely helps to reduce disease.

Some grasses have much greater resistance to diseases than others. The use of the better grasses is a big step toward minimizing interference. We are trying to look at this whole operation from the long-term standpoint. We know that an attack of disease must be dealt with on the spot and not sometime later.

Late Afternoon Work

It has been a pleasure to work with supts. when a course was to be prepared for a major championship. At the moment we shall refer to Canterbury where we worked with Mal McLaren getting ready for the Open. One of the operations that made history was that of mowing when the grass was dry. During the tournament the fairway mowers were started on the first hole as soon as the last match had cleared the second tee. What a pleasure it was to see the dry grass fly behind the units and to see the near-perfect job that was done.

Frequently we have asked the question, "Why can't grass be mowed when it is dry?" When it has rained for two weeks that becomes a pretty silly question because grass has to be cut before it gets too high, wet or not. Maybe more mowing might be done in late afternoon when most players have finished for the day and there would be minimum interference with the players. Labor has a great deal to do with this idea but we have seen it work some places.

For several years we have been calling attention to the fact that well-fed turf requires less irrigation. Grass that is well supplied with nutrients can make much more efficient use of the water that is available to it. It is a fact that nitrogen is cheaper than water. To budget-minded people this should be great news because it means that golfers can have better turf at lower cost. This paragraph refers mainly to tees and fairways, not to greens.

Constructing A Course

Q. I am in the initial stages of building an 18-hole course on my farm. Please send me a list of textbooks, literature, etc., that would help me in building and maintaining and operating the course after completion. Also, would you advise me to tile the greens where there is good surface drainage? I plan to build up my greens with clay, topping with topsoil and then adding approximately 85 per cent sand. (South Carolina)



Fred H. Williams, (left front), USGA green section executive secy., who retired recently after 37 years in that position, receives a gift check from the USGA, presented by Joseph C. Dey, executive dir. of the Association. Check along with a similar gift from Mid-Atlantic GCSA were given to Fred at a luncheon held in Beltsville, Md. In the background are (l to r): T. T. Taylor, James E. Thomas, Robert L. Elder, A. E. Rabbitt, Martin F. McCarthy and Alexander M. Radko.

A. Under separate cover I am sending you a list of reference material that has been published. This should be helpful in building your library.

The best help in building the course will be to secure the services of a competent course architect. The pres. of the American Society of Golf Course Architects is David W. Gordon, Doylestown, Pa.

The best way to maintain the course after completion is to secure the services of a topnotch supt. Headquarters for the GCSA is P. O. Box 106, St. Charles, Ill.

If subsoil under your greens is clay, which will slow the rate of water percolation, I would definitely advise a tile system. If, however, you have sand and gravel, which will permit the ready drainage, then you will not need tile. Surface drainage is advisable in any case, whether or not the subsoil structure demands the use of tile.

I'm a little fearful of your plan to first build up your greens with clay, then top with topsoil and then add approximately 85 per cent sand. If you build up your greens with clay, then it must be that you have a clay soil. This is the building material. This demands that the tile be installed in the clay base to assure good drainage. I would mix the topsoil and the sand together with a bulldozer, motor patrol grader or some mechanical device so that the materials are mixed properly and uniformly off the site. Properly prepared top mixture can be hauled to the green, dumped and spread so that you have a perfectly uniform sandy soil on top of your drainage system. This will assure well-drained greens, deep roots and much greater golfing satisfaction in the years to come.

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Cheap Pool Point Is Expensive

(Continued from page 38)

Your members will be more inclined to sing in the showers (and lockerrooms) if they don't have to look at "practically new" paint that has gone to pot because of steam, dampness and mildew. So many people think that they have to accept discolored and peeling paint and bare patches of plaster. It just isn't so. A paint designed to stand up to these expensive nuisances will keep its clean, enamel finish for many years without repainting. Furthermore, it will protect the plaster beneath it from breaking down. As you probably know, once moisture gets at plaster, the plaster begins to lose strength. A good shower room paint keeps moisture away from plaster.

Don't use paint left over from your pool. Get a paint made especially for shower and locker room ceilings, walls and floors. We think you'll find a chlorinated natural rubberbase paint will be the best answer to this problem.

Sales Ideas

(Continued from page 44)

bring fine returns if it is practiced. It amounts to this: Go out of your way to give good service and you'll build up a fine reputation through a chain reaction among your players. Once the reputation is established, you can't help but continue to increase sales, provided, of course, you keep up the kind of service your members have become accustomed to. I had quite a bit of success in 1958 in club sales. Once again, I can't claim that I did anything that hasn't been done before. I stressed that the golfer can only be properly fitted in a pro shop; I encouraged everyone interested in buying new clubs to give them

a thorough test on the practice fairway before buying; I made as liberal an allowance as economically feasible on trade-in clubs.

Grau's Answers

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Common Bermuda Infestation

Q.—I would like to know what can be done about Bermudagrass in our greens. We have Colonial and creeping bent in the greens. Bermuda was planted in fairways and it has spread to the greens. Now that I have been promoted to the No. 1 man I would like to do something about this problem. (Calif.)

A. If the greens are heavily infested you would do well to rebuild. In this process the greens should be torn up, necessary architectural changes made, sand (if needed) added, drainage corrected, brought to grade and soil sterilized to kill all existing vegetation. You have a choice between Dowfume and Vapam. Sterilize a collar at least 6-ft. wide around the putting surface. As soon as the green is ready to plant, add necessary nutrients and replant. You may choose from among these three bents: Cohansey, Old Orchard, Penncross. These bents are stronger and more resistant to Bermuda invasion than Colonial. Plant the bent 3 ft. beyond the putting surface. For the remaining 3 ft. you may plant one of the very fine Bermudas which resist the spread of common Bermuda. Two that are in use for this purpose are Ugandagrass and Tifgreen. Several courses in the Phoenix area have successfully used the protective band.

Small isolated plants of Bermuda may be cut out and the spots resodded with good bent sod from your improved bent nursery. Weekly edging seems to be adequate to prevent Bermuda invasion from collars. By any chance could there be bermuda seeds in the topdressing? Prevention is as important as control. Keep the bents vigorous with adequate feeding.

Too Much Penncross Seeding

Q. We finished seeding our new 18-hole course last fall with Penncross after the architect instructed us to sow 22 lbs. on our greens, which averaged 7,000 sq. ft. You mentioned that more



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than one lb. per 1,000 could be harmful. Would you please explain what we can expect from this and how we can cope with it? We seeded in Oct. and greens came along real well. We mowed four or five times last fall. They certainly were thick. After reading your article I am afraid we spent a lot of unnecessary money (Ohio)

A. Yes, you did spend more money than needed. Seven lbs. of Penncross bent seed to a 7,000 sq. ft. green would have been ample. The money that you spent for the other 15 lbs. could have bought a lot of extra long-lasting fertilizer that would do more good than extra seed. When seed is sown thickly, each plant that comes up is crowded by the plant next to it. When this crowding is severe, every plant is weak and only a few can survive.

Recently I saw an excellent demonstration of seeding Penncross bent too heavily. In this case the architect had recommended six lbs. to 1,000 sq. ft. The entire area was diseased because of crowding. Next to it, a plot had been properly prepared and seeded one lb. per 1,000 sq. ft. and there was no disease present.

My suggestion is to watch closely for disease and treat carefully, reducing watering so as not to encourage diseases. If you handle everything carefully, you will probably come out all right.

Gets Quick Education in Member Relations

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day and Thursday and greens were repaired by the green-cutters before mowing.

- Watering was done only when necessary, the idea being to keep the turf on the hard side to withstand traffic better.

- With only six holes, we needed strong grass that would take abuse. Therefore, we fertilized heavily and kept the grass on the long side. This kept moisture fairly well sealed.

- Roughs were cut fairly low in order to keep traffic moving.

- During the heavy playing season, we did all maintenance work in the morning and devoted afternoons to construction work on the new nine.

- To give the course a day of rest, we cancelled caddie play on Mondays. Whenever there was a heavy downpour the course was closed longer than ordinarily.

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