

GRAU'S ANSWERS TO TURF QUESTIONS

GCSA Hopes to Do Something About Built-in Headaches

The struggle to achieve golf courses with "built-in maintenance" has a new champion — newly-elected GCSA pres., James E. Thomas of Army Navy CC, Arlington, Va. There is nothing "new" about Jim's interest in the problem of avoiding built-in courses headaches. He has been correcting them for years. In his new position he plans to give full support to the 1600 GCSA members in their campaign to spell out in 1-2-3 order the most serious built-in headaches, and to outline the way in which planners, architects and builders can best work together to avoid them.

It has been said that there is an element of selfishness in the campaign to create golf courses that will be easier to maintain. Admitting that this is true, the next question is, "Isn't it about time?"

Work Around the Clock

When the weather is tough and the going gets rough, supts. often work around the clock, seven days a week, to maintain good playing conditions. When a supt. is fighting built-in headaches, a slight slip in vigilance (a man needs some sleep) against disease, flooding or stagnation easily can mean the loss of great areas of turf. A sudden disastrous turn of the weather can nullify weeks and months of careful preparation even without any slips. Too often this means an unjustified loss of job when officials do not understand the true situation. Anything, then, that will help to achieve simplified routine maintenance is worthwhile.

Golfers Benefit

The real beneficiaries of simplified maintenance resulting from improved design and construction are not the supts. but the golfers! There have been numerous



If you have questions about turf care, please send them to Fred Grau (right) c/o Golfdom.

long, loud squawks from players, "Why does the crew always have to be messing around on the course when we're playing golf?" The answer is simple: To try to keep the course playable. Properly-built courses do not need constant wet nursing to keep them in top playing condition. Routine maintenance can be accomplished when there is little or no play on the course. By contrast, only by constant attention can poorly built areas be kept playable.

Handbook Suggested

In preparing for the Houston program on "Construction Concepts of a Golf Course" letters were written to architects, builders, supts. and technical workers asking for their viewpoints. The replies poured in, all eager to expose the weaknesses of hard-to-keep courses. Each one supported the basic concepts of good construction as George Cobb, Warren Bidwell and Charlie Danner so clearly set forth in their papers at the GCSA convention. One of the suggestions has exceptional merit and it may become a reality — to prepare a guide or handbook designed to help create virtually trouble free courses.

One of the oft-repeated suggestions was to hire a qualified supt. as soon as the decision is made that a new course is to be built. Give him authority and the responsibility of protecting the interests of the club by demanding built-in maintenance that gives maximum playability even under the most adverse conditions.

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Harry Burkhardt on Winter Play

Gentlemen:

In the February issue of *Golfdom*, I was much interested in my old friend, Fred Grau's remarks on winter play damage.

We have played 2300 rounds of golf at Shawnee Hills and almost 3000 at No. 1 course at Rocky River in December and January. We have had very little damage even on the new greens at Shawnee Hills.

Winter golfers seem to have much more respect for a golf course than summer golfers.

We close the tees as soon as the first freeze comes. We have had no trouble keeping golfers off the tees. The cups are changed every 300 rounds, winter or summer and we can not see as much wear now as in the summertime.

We close the course as soon as the frost goes out of the ground, and only rarely are we caught with golfers on soft greens. I can never remember closing a course for winter play as far back as 1930.

Here we have extended good will to a number of golfers. The men and women that play in the winter are real golf fans; they are our biggest boosters. There certainly is some extra effort necessary to keep a course open in winter but then summers are no picnic either.

Sincerely,
Harry Burkhardt
Mgr., Shawnee Hills, Bedford, O.

Drainage was the term most frequently used to secure the ultimate in playability and ease of maintenance. Many maintenance headaches have been caused by faulty drainage, nearly all of which could be avoided by a better understanding of the principles of drainage and the application of these basic concepts. There is surface drainage; internal drainage; subsurface drainage; and air drainage. Each is important but all must work in perfect harmony. To violate even one phase of drainage can nullify the total effects of good construction.

Space Problem Here, Too

Space concepts received a thorough airing. Space for cup changes, space for cart traffic, space for operating maintenance equipment between greens and bunkers, space for turning mowers at green edges, space for teeing areas, etc. It boils down to the principle of spreading the traffic to

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Grau's Answers

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avoid constant and excessive wear and tear.

Too big a hurry accounts for many costly repairs and much rebuilding after the course has been opened for play. Members may be justifiably indignant at being robbed of their pleasure. How often their wrath is directed against the hapless supt. who may have argued in favor of delaying the open date to give course time to settle and mature.

"Hidden Horrors" best describes the rocks, stumps and trees which may have been bulldozed into gullies as a "base" for a green or a tee. With settling and decay, the soil sinks and the area becomes unplayable until the headache is corrected.

Starved seedbeds describes a "short cut" that cannot be detected until after the grass starts to grow. It is an accepted principle that the best time to incorporate long-lasting insoluble soil amendments is during construction, not after the grass is up when it is in a soft, tender and weak condition.

Tees or trees (greens, too) represents a decision faced by many clubs — and of-

ten they cannot have both. The problem involves that of location which can help to resolve the dilemma. Proper placement of tees or greens in relation to trees improves air movement and avoids conflict with tree roots, both vital factors in growing quality turf.

These elements and many more could be cited as valid reasons for closer collaboration between the man who, step by step, creates a beautiful course and the one who maintains it. We could mention inadequate budgets, failure to demand a performance bond, unrealistic plans and specifications, failure to have irrigation system operating before planting grass and several others.

It is encouraging at least that GCSA plans to do something about strengthening the weak points in the system.

Latham Leaves Green Section

James M. Latham, Jr. is resigning his position Apr. 1st as Southeastern agronomist for the USGA to accept other employment. James B. (Monty) Moncrief will replace Latham and Wayne Allen succeeds Moncrief in the Southwest. Allen is a Texas A & M graduate who specialized in weed control while attending school.