

Alert Supts. Are Aware of Constant Need for Change

NOTHING is completely static. Everything is in a constant state of change. In characterizing changes in the technical side of course management, we are drawing heavily on the experience of supts. in the U. S. and Canada in an effort to describe the direction of the changes taking place.

The proper starting place for this discussion is the starting place for a round of golf — the tee. Without question, tees are becoming larger, better proportioned and more immaculately groomed. The trend toward closer mowing is well established. Many superintendents mention cutting their tees at $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{3}{8}$ or $\frac{1}{4}$ ins. Tees are being managed nearly on a par with putting surfaces. Mowing is being done more on a regular schedule such as three or four times a week. Thatch removal, fertilization and watering closely resemble green programs. Heavier mowers with higher frequency of cut provide smooth, polished appearances. The light-weight tee mowers of yesterday would not be able to cut the more heavily-matted improved grasses. The result would be an excessive build-up of thatch which gives golfers a wobbly, insecure stance on turf so deep that peg tees cannot reach firm soil.

These Grasses Are Favored

These are the grasses that top the list in planting trends:

Merion bluegrass: Al Emery ranks this grass at the top for the Rocky Mountain region. Phil Glover, Ontario, Can., shares Emery's views and is replacing his ordinary tee turf with Merion sod which stands up exceedingly well with a poor water system.

Carl Anderson, Minn., sees $\frac{1}{2}$ -in. cut hurting Merion so that many Merion tees are being reseeded to bent.

Merion with red fescue is the trend in New England as Charles Baskin sees it.

Clarence Lindsay at Hagerstown, Md., is growing Merion sod to cover his re-vamped tees as soon as he is certain they won't be torn up again.

Bermuda: Cold-tolerant selections are

being extended northward until the zone of Merion and red fescue is reached. U-3 is the favorite where extreme resistance to cold is needed. Tifgreen is on the way up in Okla., says Ken Hubble; Art Snyder, veteran supt. in Arizona, says that the fine-bladed strains demand too much spraying for insects. Ruth's scale is particularly damaging. Here, then, the trend is to use more common seeded Bermuda which is more adaptable. Carl Bretzlaff gives U-3 the nod for Ind.

Earl Dowell also approves Bermuda but adds that the bad feature is having to cover it with straw and worry whether or not it will come back in the spring.

Chet Mendenhall sees most tees in the Midwest being planted to Bermuda or zoysia. Don Likes confirms this for the Greater Cincinnati region.

Zoysia Getting Bigger Play

Zoysia for tees definitely is on the increase, according to Mendenhall, Likes and Bretzlaff. It stands partial shade much better than Bermuda, grows equally well in full sun. "Slower growth" is one objection, especially where rapid healing is desirable.

The next areas of play in which definite trends are clearly observable are the fairways. There has been a rather consistent demand by players for better fairway lies. Obviously the first step in producing a tight dense turf on which the ball will sit up is closer mowing. The effect of close mowing is well known on those grasses which do not tolerate close, frequent cutting.

The trend in grasses for fairways largely is a repetition of those which we have recounted for tees. Many supts. have related sadly how they have pounded tons of bent and bluegrass into their fairways year after year, only to come up with the same clover, crabgrass and goosegrass. It is in the great transition zone, between the cool-and-warm season grasses, that we see the greatest trend in converting to Bermuda, zoysia and Merion. McSloy in Virginia sees more common Bermuda from seed by reason of low cost establishment. Snyder of Arizona favors common because of high maintenance costs of the fine-bladed types. U-3 in the Mid-Atlantic area is on the move as it is in heart of U. S. and Philadelphia and the eastern seaboard. Marshall Farnham is an ardent promoter of U-3. Frank Tull, Hercules CC, Wilmington, Del., is expanding his U-3 plantings. We see the same trend in the St. Louis and Louisville areas. Tifway is

being planted in the southeast.

Requires Close Management

Chet Mendenhall comments that the first thing we have to learn is that Bermuda will not take over by itself as many had led us to think. Good Bermuda (U-3 in his case) fairways demand a good weed control program, heavy summer fertilizing and close clipping. Chet uses a 10-blade reel and cuts four or five times a week. Water is applied during long, dry spells and in early winter if soil is dry. He tries to put Bermuda to bed with moist soil.

Don Likes is a strong supporter of Meyer zoysia for fairways. He establishes it by plugging and has planned a four to five-year program. "More or less neglect of fertilizer and water" prevents excess thatching. Don likes says further: "As for winter color, it is the most beautiful stuff you ever laid your eyes on. It changes color with the seasons, doesn't stay the same monotonous green all the time."

Merion for fairways gets top billing in Utah and Ontario. Ky. blue, red fescue and Highland bent is the choice of Lindsay at Hagerstown.

Read what Bob Grant, at Runaway Brook CC, Bolton, Mass., says: "Merion Blue, in my opinion is the only turf for this area. Following the two basic rules of 1) heavy N feeding and 2) little or no water, it is outstanding. During the construction of our second nine, I could have seeded the fairways to Merion but chose not to. I have regreted it ever since."

Avoid Interference

The problem of interference with play continues as more players crowd courses from dawn to dark. Jim Thomas feels that more equipment is part of the answer, enabling the crew to accomplish necessary work in shorter time. Starting the crew earlier in the morning will help too. In some cases it may be justifiable to hold up play until the greens are mowed and watered, ball holes repaired, cups changed and sand traps raked. Three hours may be considered average for these chores, the time lessening with more equipment and labor.

Some supts. are mowing late in the day to be out of the way for early morning golf. Heavy dew makes morning mowing messy. With labor cooperating, Carl Anderson feels that late afternoon work will be popular since more work can be accomplished and the jobs will be done

better and cleaner. Greens are the exception — they must be cut early each morning to clean them up for the day's play.

Drainage A Sore Point

Nearly every letter from a supt. contains the same refrain: "Why can't the architects and builders give us better drainage? Why must we be forced to fight to hold grass on poorly-drained soil when good drainage is so inexpensive and so easy to accomplish?" The trend in construction must be in only one direction — more and better drainage to provide continuously good playing conditions in any weather. As Paul Weiss, Allentown, Pa. says, "Proper construction will save millions in maintenance costs."

Equipment Reduces Hand Labor

More and better equipment is reducing expensive hand labor to a minimum. Architects and builders are recognizing this trend and are contouring to avoid hand labor.

Paul Weiss wants a fast-operating vacuum type machine to remove leaves and grass clippings from fairways. Many share his wish.

Types of equipment that remove deep-seated thatch and aerate wet or dry soil in the same operation are becoming more popular. Thatch control always will be an extremely important aid to maintenance as the use of vigorous disease-resistant grasses increases. Expanded disease spray programs on tees and fairways can only work toward discouraging the natural thatch-destroying organisms. The result will be more thatch to be controlled mechanically.

James Smith of N. J. says we need to learn more about the way grasses grow. He is sure that most of us do not realize how serious and continuous the thatch problem is. In renewing crowded plant growth, he believes the sound approach is that of the trained horticulturist who tears out the old, infirm diseased "mother" plant, leaving the new fresh disease-resistant virgin growth.

(To be concluded in January)

Outgrows Clubs Every Four Years

George Aulbach, former PGA vp. says a golfer who is older than 50 probably outgrows his clubs each four years. The senior golfer may outgrow his swing each 5 or 6 years. His pro, says Aulbach, ought to give him a birthday gift of a check-up lesson.