

# Push Button — Presto! Water's Everywhere

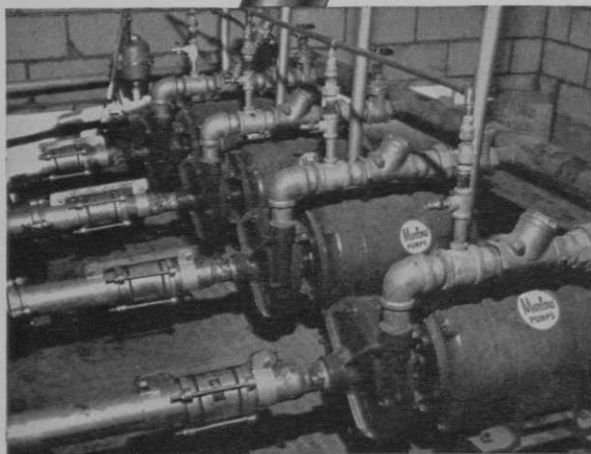
*Phil Mitchell Is Another Who's  
Finding That Automatic Equipment  
Eases the Greenmaster's Burden*

By **JAMES R. ANDERSON**

We were 200 yards from the pumping station at Colonial GC in Lynnfield, Mass., when from nowhere a sprinkler appeared and began throwing rainbows of water about 200 ft. across a fairway. "Hmm," I said, "that wasn't there a moment ago."

Phil Mitchell, the supt. laughed. In another instant the spray just seemed to evaporate and the sprinkler disappeared. We walked over and looked at the spot where the sprinkler had been. Again, as if by magic, the sprinkler popped out of the ground and water was arching through the air.

Then, suddenly, water, and then sprinkler, disappeared. It was incredulous — a little like visiting a ghost course and hav-



Phil Mitchell is shown at Sprinkler control panel of Colonial GC.



ing things come to life for a moment and then seeing them quickly die.

This isn't science fiction. In a few minutes I learned that Mitchell had sent a man ahead to the pump house to press buttons and have a little fun at my expense.

The brain and muscle center of the irrigation system is, of course, in the pump house. I was surprised to find no ugly, bulky pressure tank which I have always been told is a necessary part of an irrigation pumping system. I was further amazed to find that not just one but five pumps provide the muscle power for the system.

### Can Step Up Volume

"This pump operates automatically on a volume flow demand basis," said Phil. "The little pump there keeps pressure in the lines all the time. When I start using water, as I did a few moments ago, the first big pump kicks in and gives me up to 150 gals. a minute. If I need more water, the second pump kicks in with another 150. With all pumps running, I have 600 gals. a minute going through the sprinklers. And," added Phil, "If I ever want more water, I can add another pump to the line. If a pump goes out on me, I still have three big pumps to keep me going while the other is being repaired."

I noticed that each pump had an individual suction line going into a concrete lined "well," located inside the pump house. "Looks good to me" I said, "but can you get all the water you need out of this little well?" Phil informed me that the little well was another prize from Larchmont Engineering's "bag of tricks." An 18 in. culvert line had been brought from the pond on the other side of the fairway, about 150 ft. away, to the bottom of the well. The well consisted of a 48 in. concrete pipe placed vertically. The 18 in. line is 24 ins. below low water of the pond to maintain the water level in the well.

### Automatic Sprinkler Controller

I wanted to know more about that sprinkler we had seen outside. Phil pointed to a control panel, a small compact box mounted on the wall inside the pump house. He pushed a button and the sprinkler came up again and began throwing water. He pushed the button again and the sprinkler turned off and disappeared.

Mitchell explained that the front nine would be watered automatically on Monday and Thursday nights, and that the

back nine would be watered on Tuesday and Friday nights. There are about 60 sprinklers on front nine, seven operating at one time. There are nine zones. Each zone waters for one hour to apply the equivalent of  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. of rain.

This program prevails throughout the season. The Colonial supt. showed me how simply this program had been set up on the controller. He explained that it would require less than five minutes, with no tools necessary, to set up a completely different program.

"That's not all," said Phil. "When I'm out on the course I can turn on any sprinkler manually without using any tools. I don't have to come back here to push a button."

### Mitchell and Mitchell

The irrigation company responsible for the design of this revolutionary system is Larchmont Engineering, Lexington, Mass. Architect William A. Mitchell of Sunapee, N. H., designed the new 18 hole course at Colonial and under Phil Mitchell's supervision construction is nearly completed. Their aim has been, from the very beginning, to build the outstanding championship course in New England. They are certainly on the right track with their water system.

At my club we have a quite serious fairway watering problem. There is so much play during the dry season that it is impossible for the maintenance dept. to get on the course before dark to do any watering. Our system is manually operated, meaning that we have to hire a night watering man. It is difficult to find an employee who will stay around long enough to learn how to do the job properly. As a result, we suffer from inadequate watering in some areas, and over-watering in others.

### Only Practical Answer

The only practical answer for us is automation. Our club officials have investigated and, at least, reached the conclusions listed below, although they haven't yet taken steps to convert to an automatic system:

(1) As at Colonial, automatic equipment adds only 15 per cent to the total cost of an installation;

(2) The equipment can be installed almost as easy as stringing Christmas lights";

(3) Within a few years, labor savings will defray the cost of converting to automatic equipment.