

GRAU'S ANSWERS TO TURF QUESTIONS

BY FRED V. GRAU



Accuracy Doesn't Mean Just Coming Close

It would seem that the word, Accuracy, hardly needs further definition. Webster describes it as "freedom from mistake; precision; exactness". It seems appropriate to quote from an anonymous philosopher who said:

- History is the study of man's successes and failures, but pay closest attention to man's failures — you will learn more from them.

- Always try to learn from the mistakes of others. You haven't got time to make them all yourself.

Were it not for the accuracy of modern timepieces our systems of appointments, transportation timetables, radio and television schedules and other facets of our daily living would become hopelessly snarled. Consider too, the importance of the accuracy of the stopwatch in determining the outcome of races of men, horses and vehicles.

Editor Blames the Printer

Anyone who has ever been in the publishing game knows what it is to live in constant agonizing dread of the unconscious, inevitable mistakes that crop up on the printed page. Gremlins mostly get the blame. Sometimes they are simply the result of temporary lack of discipline on the part of the proofreaders or others. At times one suspects that they might be the result of just not knowing the score.

The story is told concerning a family by the name of O'Hara, members of which regularly are in the news. For years they have been patiently correcting reporters and editors who insist upon spelling their name O'Hara. It is still going on.

This Takes Some Explanations

It is unbelievable what hotel clerks can do with the simple name "Grau".

Upon leaving the office it is customary to leave with the secretary my itinerary and the names of hotels where I'll stay. Family relations become strained when Mrs. Grau tries to relay a long distance call and is advised that her husband is not registered. At long last, after visions of chicanery have been dispelled, the hotel discovers a guest by the name of Gran, Gray, Graul, Grace — all living at my home — every name but the right one.

Pity the poor girl who was the unwitting victim of a wrong telephone number printed on hundreds of business cards that were rather widely distributed. Patiently she would explain, "No, I'm not Bill. Bill doesn't live here. No, I don't know who Bill is. I'm not even married."

Accuracy in the manufacture of clubs and balls has contributed immeasurably to the game of golf. The necessity for close tolerances in producing equipment is so apparent as to need no further comment. It has become obvious that any lack of accuracy in the game, especially in the putting department, can be attributed principally to the human factor.

It Applies to Mowers

Without extreme accuracy in the adjustment of greenmowers it would not be possible to make the foregoing statement with any degree of accuracy. Techniques have been developed which permit supts. to produce smooth, true putting surfaces which permit of perfectly predictable results from a stroked putt, given the ability to measure the input of forces derived from human sources.

The modern miracle of perfection in playing surfaces is the result of many forces acting in harmony under skilled direction. Responsibility lies in the integration of a connected series of accurate decisions and actions in a complex, dy-

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Feb. 18-21 — Penn State U. turf confer-
ence University Park, Pa.

Feb. 21-22 — Minnesota GCSA confer-
ence, Minneapolis

Feb. 25-28 — Cornell U., Statler Hall,
Ithaca, N. Y.

Mar. 4-6 — Midwest Regional turf con-
ference, Purdue U., Lafayette, Ind.

Mar. 7-8 — U. of Massachusetts turf
conference, Amherst, Mass.

Mar. 12-14 — Turfgrass short course,
Iowa State U., Ames.

Mar. 21-22 — Michigan Turfgrass Con-
ference, Mich. State U., East Lansing.

Mar. 27-29 — Ontario Agricultural Col-
lege, Guelph.

namic biological system. The supt. must
interpret scientific findings in the light
of his experiences and his knowledge of
course conditions. Involved are machines,
grasses, fertilizers, insects, diseases, chem-
icals and people. Mistakes happen, of
course, but much less frequently than one
would expect.

One Part Per Million

Some chemicals are so potent that the
difference of a few parts per million can
mean the difference between perfection
and just another job. Others, too, may
have difficulty visualizing 1 ppm. (one
part per million). In other terms 1 ppm
is:

one square foot in 200 putting greens;
one needle in a haystack of one ton (not
precise);

one minute in 2 years (approximate);
one pint in 625 power sprayers with
200-gallon tanks.

Accuracy in developing correct dilu-
tions is of little consequence if other
measurements have a lesser degree of ac-
curacy. Materials often are reported to
have failed. Investigation reveals that the
specified quantity had been applied to
an area half again larger. For some un-
known reason there seems to be a re-
luctance to measure turfgrass areas accu-
rately. Questions about the fairway acre-
age may get the reply, "I really don't
know for sure but I think it is about 25
acres." Actual measurement may reveal
45 acres of fairway turf. Manufacturer's
recommendations for rates imply effective
performance when applied as specified!

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Many are the cases where the product was blamed instead of inaccuracy of application.

Jesse DeFrance used to maintain an area of putting turf at Rhode Island that measured precisely 1,000 square feet. Visitor's guesses as to the area involved soared to 2,500 sq. ft. and dropped as low as 500. Truly, the eye can deceive.

N Sources Important

Part of our concept of Accuracy involves telling the whole truth, not just part of it. There are mixed fertilizers on the market that contain "xx per cent organic nitrogen". Part comes from inorganics, part from natural organics, part from dry urea-forms. Only when it is known how much N each source contributes is it possible for the supt. to evaluate and to use the product properly and intelligently.

All labelled chemicals must carry a statement of the percentage of active ingredient. It was not always thus. Only thru concerted action was this accomplished. The seed industry has had its moments also. When Merion bluegrass came on the market there was a scramble to market "Merion Mixtures" and to capitalize on the free publicity. There was

nothing illegal or dishonest about selling a mixture which, according to the label, "Contains Merion bluegrass" but the 2 per cent that some of them contained did nothing to produce repeat customers.

More than 30 years ago we were impressed with the need for accuracy in diagnosing turfgrass troubles. Several persistent attacks of "dollarspot" were dosed with every remedy in the book (and some that were not in the book) only to have supts. learn, sadly and much later, that the grass was being eaten alive by sod webworms. More common today is the diagnosis of drought for nitrogen starvation. Much like the "dollarspot-sod webworm" mixup, the symptoms are similar. Water mistakenly applied to correct a nitrogen deficiency only makes it worse.

Winter Play Dilemma

Q. Each fall when we close our club, I have the supt. remove the cups from greens and use temporary greens. We treat for snow-mold, etc., just before the supt. is through for the season.

Complaints come rolling in from members, other post-season players and hundreds of college kids who play many rounds after we close free of charge. The board doesn't think I



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should take the cups out; I catch the devil for doing so.

I give as my reasons to them: I don't want weed seeds tracked on our greens in fall; the golfers wear the dry, dormant bent grass off around the cup, leaving large worn spots; there is nobody around to change cups.

Am I right or wrong? Please answer this so I can show the board and convince them I'm doing the right thing. Also, I hope you can tell me other good reasons why I should stick to my guns.

P.S. Is there anything one can do to keep poa annua from spreading in a wet season? (Minnesota)

A. You seem to be caught on the horns of a dilemma. It appears that the board approves (1) closing the course; (2) letting the supt. go until spring; (3) leaving cups in for continued play after closing the course.

From the viewpoint of this department, you have our 100 per cent backing in your stand. When greens are closed for the season, there is no other alternative. You need no additional reasons other than this is the only way to have presentable greens in spring.

If the board votes to leave the cups in for post-season play on dormant grass, you have little choice but to comply. Point out in a letter the consequences and recommend that the supt. be retained on a 12-month basis to look after the damaged greens. Recommend a larger budget and a large putting green nursery so that ruined

areas on the greens can be resodded the first thing in the spring. Recommend a realistic schedule of green fees for out-of-season play to help repair the damages and to hire the extra labor that will be needed.

Another way out is to build an extra set of greens, one for summer and one for after-season play. The greens that are ruined by late play can be repaired at leisure during the next season.

P.S. Before the poa annua problem can be discussed intelligently it will be helpful if you will outline in detail the management practices that are in effect all through the season. Send a copy of your soil tests for several years. Outline fertilizer treatments, how often irrigation water is applied, the kind of grass you have on the greens, etc. It should be possible for you to minimize poa annua so that it ceases to be a problem.

Thomas Heads Mid-Atlantic

James E. Thomas, supt. of Army-Navy CC, Arlington, Va. and former head of the national GCSA, has been elected president of the Mid-Atlantic GCSA. Vice president is Thomas A. Doerer, Jr., Ft. Belvoir GC. Sec.-treas. is Sheldon R. Betterly of Chantilly National G & CC. Directors of the organization are George C. Gumm, Angelo Cammarota, James A. Reid, Bob Shields, Barclay Whetsell and Frank J. Haske.