

# 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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## Turf Dates

Feb. 6-15 — 34th GCSA International  
conference and show, El Cortez Hotel,  
San Diego

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 "dollar spot" 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 "dollar spot-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 snowmold, 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