

THE WEEKEND MAKE READY

Set a deadline and stick to it and your course will be ready when the Saturday and Sunday golfers swarm in . . . Even if you have 45 holes to maintain

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This article is condensed from a speech made by Smith at the Midwest GCSA turf clinic, held in December at Olympia Fields (Ill.) CC.

Every supt. has his own way of getting the absolutely necessary things done. As for myself, I have established a deadline — an unrelenting one, I might add. At 4:30 p.m. every Friday afternoon during the playing season the 45 holes at Silver Lake (a semi-private club) must be in the finest possible condition, ready for the surge of weekend golfers. There is no hedging on this. It is impossible to accomplish any work on the courses during the peak play period. I know it — and so do my employees. All we can hope to get to on Saturdays and, if necessary, on Sundays are the offsite jobs.

If, by any chance, a Friday or a Monday is a holiday, giving us a three-day weekend, our problems are multiplied.

The big factor, of course, is the weather. It helps greatly if it doesn't rain on Friday, but rain or not the deadline stands. I keep the five-day forecast in mind, but usually call the weatherman once a day to check on the humidity, the southwest wind velocity out of nearby Joliet (Ill.) and any frost warnings.

Every Blade Must Be Cut

I try to have every blade of grass at Silver Lake mowed on Friday. Monday isn't critical. Anything not finished then can easily be completed on Tuesday. If tees and fairways are mowed any earlier than Friday afternoon they will be shaggy and complained about on Sunday. To accomplish this one-day manicuring job requires a lot of equipment. Each machine needs a qualified operator. Silver Lake is never short on manpower. In 1963 I had five fulltime men and 15 highschool and college boys on the payroll.

Our work schedule starts on Thursday evening while the twilight league players are on the course. The practice putting greens and bent nurseries are watered while we wait for the course to clear and the southwest wind to die down. Usually, about nine o'clock we can make the first set on the greens. It takes five sets to water the greens on the 18-hole North and South courses. Rolling Hills, the new 9-hole layout with its large sandy greens, is watered independently and requires four sets.

The length of each set is not standardized. I make this decision at the last minute considering when the greens were watered last, and how much water they will accept without flooding. I usually water heavy on Thursday night. This allows the greens to dry out some on Fri-

day before subjecting them to the week-end traffic.

On Friday night green watering is a headache because traffic wounds on soft greens don't heal rapidly and there is always plenty of evidence of ballmarks. If the wind doesn't let down on Thursday night, I'm forced to water Friday evening, but the sets are appreciably shorter.

Friday morning all the greens are mowed, and following right behind the greenmowers are the two spray rigs. The 45 greens, two putting greens, and two bent nurseries are sprayed each Friday. Each rig takes out six loads and barring any breakdowns, it is usually 4 p.m. when they are finished. This Friday fungicide application is a Philadelphia-Baltimore practice. The supts. there want to be safe over any three-day weekends when they operate with skeleton crews.

Stay Clear of Greens

When the greenmowers are returned to the barn, two Toro Professionals are moved out to mow tees, and a third to clean up around trees and bushes. The Locke triplex is used to mow the banks around the greens and one width around the fairway traps. We make an effort to keep the tractors from mowing too close to the greens so that their wheelmarks aren't seen in the same place all the time. This places a heavy burden on the Locke operator.

Two tractors, pulling seven-gang units, are used to mow fairways on the South Course. A new, low-center-of-gravity tractor pulls a five-gang on hilly Rolling Hills. After everything is operating smoothly, Ted Wiersema, my mechanic, mows the North course fairways, which are long and wide, with a nine-gang unit. I always have a man ready to replace Ted in case he is called back on a breakdown. At about 3:30 p.m. all the fairways but one or two have been finished and it's quite satisfying to see three tractors rolling down that last fairway. All week long one seven-gang and one five-gang have been working the roughs. So there is never any rough to be mowed on Friday.

Our extra help push rotaries on the clubhouse lawn or along the creeks where weekend bottlenecks are likely to occur.

The Friday night details include: changing the hole cups for Saturday morning, filling ballwashers and putting out clean towels. On Friday nights we water tees in three sets, all of 1½ hours duration.

Saturday and Sunday mornings my crew goes to work before the sun rises. We load five greenmowers on the pickup truck and drop them off on Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 of the South course. A second truckload takes care of the low numbered greens on the North course. The remaining four machines mow the practice putting greens and then proceed to Rolling Hills. By 7:30 a.m. all the greens have been mowed and the machines washed and put away. When the sandtraps have been raked, and the garbage hauled from the refreshment stands, the employees are free to go home.

Cups Are Changed

Just before noon on Saturday two boys change the hole cups and move the tee markers. Around 6 p.m. the hole cups are changed again for Sunday morning.

On Sunday morning the greens are mowed again, traps raked, tee markers changed and garbage hauled. The crew is usually homeward bound by 8:30 a.m.

An emergency crew is on alert for Sunday syringing duty since the last watering of the greens took place early Friday morning. At noon on Sunday the hole cups are changed once again.

On Sunday evenings I usually return to the club. This enables me to look for any weekend damage, start the pumps and give the waterman his schedule. On Sunday (as on Thursday) we can water more heavily because Monday's play is light. Sunday evening is a fine time to prepare the coming week's schedule, Tournaments on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. How many golfers? Which course are they on? Is there a ladies group this week that wants special attention? If we have 85 airline stewardesses on the North course on Tuesday, that's where I want to be! That's one of my fringe benefits.

How about twilight leagues this week? Are they playing every night or do we get a break one night this week?

Does this sound like a merry-go-round? Confidentially, it is.

Change Handicap Allowance

Under new rules adopted by the USGA, golfers in four-ball play may now use 100 per cent of the difference between their handicaps and that of the low-handicapped player on a better ball basis. In all other four-ball play they will use full handicaps. Previously the allowance was 85 per cent.