

Visits to Other Courses Best Part of Turf Education

Studying how experienced supts. handle a job enables young men to get their problems solved

By **PAUL VOYKIN**

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Because of differences in topography, soil condition, drainage and, of course budgets, the maintenance of a course isn't exactly alike at any two clubs. As far as I am concerned, about the only thing supts. actually have in common is the weather — or their battle against it. Weather and nature are the most important influences we have to contend with in our business, yet little is spoken or written about these factors in comparison with turf itself, fertilizers, insecticides and similar things that become so much a part of our lives.

In the 12 years I have been in the turf business, the most successful supts. I have run across are those who not only have wide technical knowledge and practical sense, but understand how to work with nature and its elements. They never fight nature or try to rush it. They learn to live with it and, that, I think is the secret of their success.

This is something you don't learn in a classroom. Part of it comes from experience, although it may be inborn with some men. At any rate, it doesn't come easy to some of us, mainly because we don't have enough patience. But without a smattering of it, no number of diplomas, reports, charts or skill as a public relations man is going to make any supt. much of a success. How much or how little of this knowledge, or instinct, or whatever you may want to call it a person has, makes the difference between a good supt. at one club and a mediocre one across the highway.

We all realize that there is a great demand for youth and education in our profession. If there wasn't, we would never have grown beyond the gardener stage. But let's not get carried away by the diplomas and immediately give titles of supt. and foreman to fellows just out of school. Let's first show them how to handle the machines we use and the supplies we deal with. Let's show them how men have to be handled. Most important of all, let's let these young men spend an apprenticeship in nature's classroom. It's here that the fellows who stay on in our business are separated from the dropouts.

Good Man Priceless

Next to learning how to cope with nature, I'd say our most important job is getting along with the people who work for us. The Chicago area is beset with golf labor problems. Most of these are due to the fact that work on the course is temporary or seasonal and wages are low. In too many cases, only transients are attracted. I know of a few cases where supts. have become so wrought up over the lack of quality in their poor workmen that they have chased away both the good and the bad by their attitude toward everyone who works for them. A good man comes close to being priceless, especially when the pressure is on in July and August. So my advice to the young supts. is to cultivate as many of them as possible.

For the last several years, I have hired Mexican Americans at Briarwood. They

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Others Get Praise, Money

(Continued from page 32)

sional were hired by an area club. Which man and position was given a big send-off in the newspaper? You guessed it — the professional. The supt's name wasn't mentioned.

Supt. Overlooked

Last winter I attended an employee's Christmas party at one of the local private country clubs. I heard warm praise of the fine atmosphere of the clubhouse and excellence of the food. The manager of the club was lauded for the great job he had performed the past year. But again the golf course or the supt. wasn't mentioned. The course, I know, had been in fine shape all year.

So, how can the supt., hope to advance his profession and earnings if he allows such things to continue? I reiterate, "We must inform the public." Let's not sulk in our maintenance buildings and continue to be the unknown or forgotten men.

Visit Other Courses

(Continued from page 35)

come from Texas in the spring eager to work. Late in the fall, when things slow down at the club, they are happy to return home. That makes it ideal for them and me. Mexicans are capable of doing more work in hot weather than any other nationality I know of. I think the secret is that they drink enormous quantities of water and it doesn't seem to make them sick as it does people of other nationalities. Or, it may be that Mexicans are basically very happy people who derive their greatest pleasure from working with the soil. I have been told that many of them aren't content working on inside jobs.

We are told that eventually automation is going to catch up with course maintenance and that in five or ten years, our labor requirements will be cut in two, if not more. I feel that we will see some changes, but as to how they are going to affect our manpower requirements, I wouldn't venture to say. In the future we

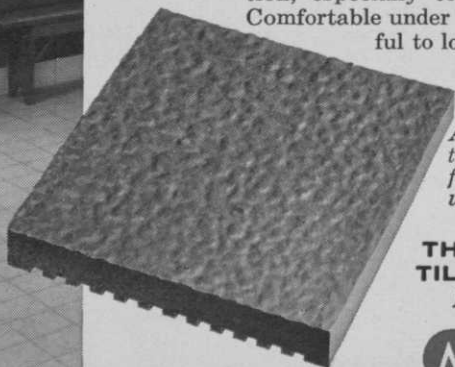


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will have chemicals that will require only one or two applications a year for near complete control of insects and disease. That is, unless they invent new insects and diseases. Fertilizer also will become a one-shot proposition and somebody will devise a grass retardant. All of us will have automatic irrigation systems and, of course, equipment will be steadily improved as it has in the last decade or so.

Visit Other Course

Youngsters just out of school, who are taking over as head supts. within a year or two or three of graduation, sometimes can learn more in one day by visiting another course and talking to an experienced greenmaster than six months of school will teach them. For example, in the last few years we have been making a transition from bluegrass to close-cut fairways. I'd estimate that we now have about 60 per cent poa and 40 per cent bent. It has taken some time to work up to this proportion. In fact, it has been a rather slow and tedious job and I've never been 100 per cent happy with the condition of my fairways, especially during the hot months.

Two years ago, at the suggestion of Bill Stuppel, who was Exmoor CC in Highland Park, Ill., for 45 years before retiring a few months ago, I started on a new type of seeding program. We didn't have much to show for our previous efforts until Stuppel explained why he always had waited until August to seed bent into his fairways. The ground then is warmest, he explained, the poa is weak and other grasses are more or less dormant. This leaves room for the bent to start germinating.

Multiple Benefits

We use a disk seeder in this operation. Besides incorporating the seed into the soil, the disks slice the grass, giving what amounts to a verticut effect. Localized dry spots also are opened up in the process. The operation, as far as I am concerned, is better than aerifying. At any rate, our fairways blossomed in 1963 and give promise of being even more luxuriant this summer.

I might have gone on for years using my old method of seeding with only fair results had I not asked Bill Stuppel for his advice. It proves that the newer men

NEW

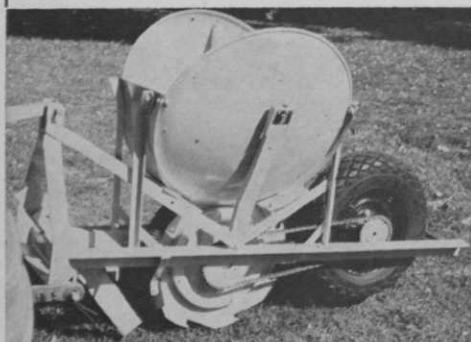
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in the greentending business can profit by taking an afternoon off occasionally and visiting courses where more experienced supts. are in charge. Many times, mere observation of how these men handle certain maintenance operations opens your eyes as to how you can improve many of your own.

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A price list showing all costs of service can be obtained by writing to Niron at 206 B N. College Ave., Newton, N.C.

National Junior Golf Camp

The National Junior golf camp will be held on the 50-acre Smith-Walbridge camp, Maxwellton CC and South Shore CC, Syracuse, Ind., from June 28 through July 3. Denny Champagne, veteran PGA pro, is the director. Classes are open to boys and girls, 8 through 18. There is also a special day camp for adults 18 and over. The Junior camp fee is \$64.50 and includes room, meals, lessons and green fees. The adult fee is \$39.50. Inquiries should be sent to Smith-Walbridge Camp, Syracuse.

A color motion picture of the 1964 PGA Seniors Teacher Trophy tournament is now available from Modern Talking Picture Service, Inc., 3 E. 54th st., New York. The 16mm film, which lasts 20 minutes, can be obtained free of charge.