

Blastoff Extends Season; Blows Up \$50,000 Revenue

Charlie Bartlett devises a blower that sweeps up leaves and sweeps in money at tree-lined Timber Trails course

After mid-September and until the middle of April there wasn't much golf at Timber Trails GC, near LaGrange, Ill. This narrow, tree-lined semi-private course was cramming more than 50,000 rounds into the five-month period between April and September, but beyond this, business came to a near standstill because fairways and roughs were buried in leaves. Nobody had ever devised an effective way to get out from under them once they had started to fall. Timber Trails, its patrons agreed, was a fine place to play during the summer, but with the coming of fall the ever dropping leaves changed this. More balls could be lost than if the course had a water hazard guarding every green.

The income of Charlie Bartlett, Timber Trails' pro-manager, depends to some



Charlie Bartlett opens throttle on blower he designed and revs its output to 130 mph.

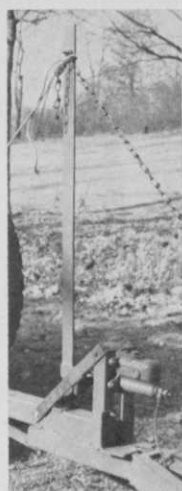
extent on the number of rounds played during the season. When he came to the LaGrange course in 1958, he quickly found that his paydays became leaner with the coming of fall, and it was the following May before they began to fatten up again. It's bad enough to work on a seasonal arrangement since a person normally may have to live through from four to six months of lean days if he's in the golf business, but when harvest time is curtailed by such as falling leaves, a remedy is urgent.

Mulchers Too Slow

For two or three seasons, Bartlett went along with the idea of sweeping the course with a chain link fence attached to a tractor. It worked quite well when the leaves were dry, but when they became wet and matted, the fencing didn't do much of a job of picking them up. Two 80-inch mulchers purchased in 1960 were effective enough in reducing the leaves to chaff, but it took at least an hour for them to cover a single fairway. Since 16 of the 18 holes at Timber Trails are bor-



Len Ainey, who has been a big help in the development of Timber Trails blower, mans tractor in cleaning up the rough.



Low slung blower blasts leaves and sprigs and deposits them some 100 feet away. At right is closeup of hydraulic hand brake. Bartlett plans to convert it to a foot-operated brake.

dered by trees that didn't represent progress. Then, too, it was a problem to maneuver the mulchers in and among the trees in the rough.

About three years ago, Bartlett picked up a cue while watching a Roto Mist sprayer in action. He noticed that it strongly rustled the leaves in a tree spraying operation, and reasoned that if it were aimed at the ground it might solve the leaf problem at Timber Trails. Late that summer, the club invested in a used Roto Mist unit.

More Power Needed

The sprayer was mounted on a truck bed and used in the fall of 1961 at Timber Trails. It didn't perform as satisfactorily as hoped. Because it was mounted so high off the ground, the sprayer didn't pick up leaves within 20 feet of the vent. Able to produce a wind speed of about 100 mph, it blew them only 30 feet or so. Bartlett decided that Roto Mist was right in principle, but it needed to be made more powerful and mounted on a lower chassis. What he wanted was a blower rather than a sprayer.

So, he set about designing a model that he thought would work. A onetime Navy machinist mate, the Timber Trails pro-manager is almost as familiar with machinery as he is with swinging a golf club. Designing a blower that pays its way on a golf course wasn't too much of a task for him.

Just Like the Jet Stream

The model that he designed is a more

powerful version of a tree sprayer. It has a 42-inch fan that is powered by a 30 h.p. Wisconsin engine. The unit generates a wind speed of 130 mph, enough to blow a man off his feet. It is set on a low slung carriage (10-inches high) and the vent opening is only about two feet above the ground. The vent is depressed at an angle of about 25° so that it picks up leaves only four or five feet away. The 130 mph velocity that the Bartlett blower generates is sufficient to blow leaves about 100 feet. The unit is pulled by a tractor.

The blower is mounted on four swivels and is braked hydraulically. When the brake, now hand operated, is released, the jet force generated by the fan rotates the machine 360 degrees. The unit, which cost \$3,500 to machine and assemble, was built by General Blower Co., Skokie, Ill. Two clubs in the Chicago area, Cog Hill and Skokie CC, use copies of the Bartlett blower in ridding their courses of leaves.

10-Minute Operation

In operation, the blower assembly is pulled down the center of a fairway. It blasts the leaves into the adjoining rough, makes a turn, and works the other side. Less than 10 minutes are consumed in a single fairway cleaning operation and the entire Timber Trails course can be handled in not much more than three hours. After the fairways are ridded of leaves, the roughs are cleaned up. It isn't un-

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ished 19th. Following that, he collected money in eight consecutive tournaments before concluding his travels for the 1955 season. As debuts in pro golf go, Ernie's was hard to beat.

In 1956, the Quail Creek pro started at Los Angeles in January and played through to the San Antonio Open in March without earning as much as three-meal-a-day money. He was unsponsored and at home, Mrs. Vossler and four young children were rather hungrily awaiting a tournament dividend check. Ernie was on the verge of wiring his wife and telling her to lay out the plumber's tools. But he hung around San Antonio long enough to finish second in the tournament there and collect \$1,700. Bankruptcy never looked his way again after that. He had a good season in 1956, although he broke a leg in the fall. But by this time Ernie was an established tournament player and between 1957 and 1961, when he quit the tour, Mrs. Vossler received checks just as regularly as though her husband were working in a bank.

Blower Increases Revenue

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common for Len Ainey, the Timber Trails tractor operator, to blow the leaves across four or five fairways. Usually, they are blown into windrows two or three feet high and then mulched.

The blower was first used at Timber Trails in the fall of 1962. After only two passes around the course it gave every fairway and green a hound's tooth but it was too late in the season to bring back the bulk of the golfers. But business did pick up! Last spring, opening day was moved ahead at least two weeks, and effective playing time was extended more than two months beyond the customary mid-September cutoff. On late October weekends in 1963, with near perfect weather prevailing, Timber Trails was getting as many as 250 rounds a day.

Fee Revenue Increased

The net result is that fee revenue for 1963 was more than \$50,000 higher than in 1962, with practically the entire increase being due to the new method that

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is used to sweep the course. Since Timber Trails no longer is known among golfers as a place to be avoided once the leaves start to fall, Charlie Bartlett expects that the gross for 1964 will be somewhat higher than it was in 1963. And, of course, the nice thing about it is that he's working on a percentage.

In Good Company

Bartlett has been in the golf business since 1956 when he went to work for Errie Ball at Oak Park (Ill.) CC as an assistant pro. Two years later he transferred to Timber Trails to take over the pro-manager post. While in the Navy during the Korean episode, Bartlett was able to concentrate on both aviation maintenance and golf. After he obtained his machinist mate rating and worked on the flight line for a year or so, he was appointed golf range director at the San Diego Naval Base. His assistant was Gene Littler. Some highly talented young men, incidentally, knocked the ball around that range while Bartlett was there. They included Bill Casper, Bob Goetz, Mac Hunter, Bill Bisdorf and Bud Holscher.

Grau's Answers

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must have no undesirable side effects and also it must improve turf quality. Some fertilizers contain only single elements such as Nitrogen, Phosphorus or Potassium. Then there are mixed fertilizers which may contain two, three or more of these nutrient elements. Sometimes they are called "balanced fertilizers", but no one knows for what purpose they are 'balanced.' It is a poor term. "Complete fertilizers" are those which contain traditionally the three major nutrients, N-P-K. They may also contain secondary and trace nutrients. In turf it is wasteful to apply complete fertilizers when one or more of the nutrients already are in plentiful supply. Then it is only commonsense to apply only those nutrients that are needed.

What is Chelation? Essentially it is the encompassing of a metallic ion within and as a part of an organic molecule. Zinc (Zn), Iron (Fe), Copper (Cu) are examples of inorganic metallic ions which

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