



GRAU'S Answers to Turf Questions

By FRED V. GRAU

There seems to be no slackening of the pace at which new golf courses are being built or at which established clubs are adding another nine or eighteen. The owners of some of the projects are more fortunate than others: their course was built right the first time by a competent architect-builder team armed with firm reliable specifications that leave no doubt as to *who* does what, how, and *who* is responsible.

What about "the others" where specifications virtually are non-existent and no one seems to be responsible. We are upset and worried about the reports from men in the field who know, who say frankly that this or that course will have to be rebuilt in a year or two after it has been opened to play. We've seen them ourselves.

For many years there has been a total failure on the part of any national organization (or international, for that matter) to attempt to correct this deplorable, costly and wasteful situation. For any individual to tackle this gargantuan dilemma is unthinkable.

Obviously the American Society of Golf Course Architects cannot correct the situation because some of the offenders are not members of the organization. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to impose restrictions and sanctions upon a non-member. It must be borne in mind, too, that some of the finest courses that do *not* have to be rebuilt are the products of architects who belong to no organization except some local superintendents associations, and the GCSAA, of course.

Can the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America see to it that every new project is done right the first

time? Obviously not, even though there has been expended great effort on its part to "Avoid Built-In Headaches" (Houston, 1960).

The superintendent of the new course is hired (usually) after the damage has been done. Then, too, even though the new superintendent has been hired to supervise construction and to eliminate errors and any deviation from specs, sometimes he cannot be effective. I've seen a capable young superintendent tearing out his hair because the owner told him to "mind his own D--- business" when he reported a flagrant deviation from specs.

Can the universities and the agronomists who prepare guide specifications be asked to be responsible? Obviously not, because they are not in a position to assume control of operations. They can help write specs when and if they are asked. Many times they are by-passed in the interests of so-called "economy."

Can the ruling body for golf, with its far-flung agronomic divisions, do anything to correct the deplorable vacuum in the system? Apparently, the answer, as we understand it, is "No, we can't help them until the club becomes a member and subscribes to the service."

Where does the National Golf Foundation Stand? This splendid group, understaffed as many organizations are, does not have the directive to police all the new projects.

At the risk of being censured for being facetious, I can't resist wondering if maybe the Boy Scouts or the 4-H Clubs could develop projects in this field.

Seriously, and this is a very serious situation, we wonder if there isn't some

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merit in considering the development of a small non-partisan unbiased group (a committee, if you please) to review all architectural and building proposals for golf with a view toward eliminating those which have no chance of success. I cannot claim this idea as my own. I wish that it were possible. A short time ago in a conversation with Eddie Ault this idea of a "Review Board" was partially developed. The savings to be realized from stopping (or revising) only a few ill-advised projects easily could support an office, a full-time director, and traveling expenses for the committee for a considerable period.

We did not have the time to develop fully the operational aspects of the "Review Board." I've presented only bare (and mostly unpleasant) facts. Do GOLFDOM readers agree with Ault and me that the idea has merit? Could it be made to work? How could it best operate? Would each of several organizations be willing to put one representative on the Board? Obviously, and intentionally, I have suggested an open-ended proposition. There must be *some* way that some group could help the deluded and those who are about to be "flim-flammed." Does anyone have a better suggestion?

Q. Our Penncross greens are only two years old and are considered "tops." About mid-March I noticed that the greens looked "dappled" or "mottled." We followed your advice and bought Blue Tag Certified Penncross seed and determined that the seals were unbroken when the bags were delivered. What is your explanation of the dappling? (Maryland)

A. Penncross bent seed is produced as a *polycross* from three vegetative parents. It is inevitable that, at certain times of the year, individual plant types will become evident in a superficial way. Cold weather develops these characteristics. Remember the vari-colored patches in the old Seaside greens; some green, some purple, some puffy, etc? You need feel no concern about the dappling. As summer approaches the vigorous growth

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will erase all evidence of mottling. Do keep records on the day-to-day performance of your greens.

Q. When we seeded our new tees to Merion bluegrass and Pennlawn fescue we added a very small quantity of Penncross bent. We mow at one-half inch. Nitrogen (slow release) is at the ten-pound level. Now, just two years later, we have over 90% Penncross cover on some tees. At one-half inch we have great appearance but rather soft footing. What is ahead of us? (Maryland)

A. Management for Penncross bent is a *must*. This means mowing at *one-fourth* inch, water control to stay on the *dry* side, and vigorous thatching at intervals to maintain *firm* footing for golfers. Your golfers will appreciate properly-managed Penncross tees. We've seen some beautiful ones.

Q. One of my boys who has worked for me now has a job with the — company. He is most happy when he is work-

ing with grass. He is a sincere, dedicated young man who has that special ability that a golf superintendent must have. He has talked it over with me and I've reached the end of my rope. He would like to hear from you and to hear your version of opportunities in our turfgrass profession. I would like to enter him in the winter turf school at Penn State. Any help that you can give him (and me) would be appreciated. (Iowa)

A. The demand for well-trained young men in the turfgrass industry is unprecedented. Dr. Joe Duich, reporting at the annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council recently, said that he has about three positions open for each graduating student.

There is room at the top for young men who aren't afraid of hard work, and are willing to take the time and go to the expense of getting the training necessary to assume responsibility.

Consider for a moment that, each year, thousands of acres of prime farmland are converted to turf areas—golf courses,

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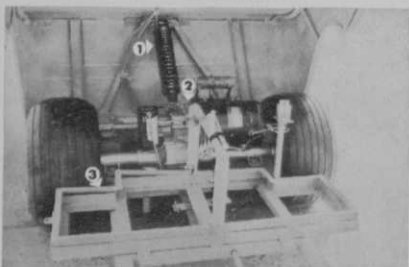


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schools, homes, churches, office buildings, industrial plants along expressways, highways. Consider, too, that untold millions of dollars are utterly wasted because there are not enough trained men to help educate turf suppliers and users. Very few states employ extension personnel to assist turf projects. Research is hurting for high-caliber men. Turf teachers are so overextended they don't know where to turn.

The person who sent me your name is an effective and highly-respected golf superintendent. All the assistance of which I am capable is yours to command. I suggest that, if you are sincerely interested in a career in turf, send in your application at once to the school of your choice: Dr. Joe Duich, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania; Dr. William M. Daniel, Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana; Dr. Eliot Roberts, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa; Dr. Joe Troll, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts.

Q. We found the October-November issue of *GOLFDOM* very interesting, especially the article on equipment needed for an 18-hole course. We have 18 holes, 7,000 yards, greens 5,500 sq. ft. average, manual irrigation on greens and fairways. Last summer (very dry) we watered the course 24 hours a day for 6 weeks (unusual). How many men do we need to maintain the course? We shall appreciate any rules available in setting up a budget. (Michigan)

A. Your problem can be solved best by consulting members of your local golf course superintendents association and getting opinions based on terrain, prevailing wage rates, amount of hand labor needed because of architectural eccentricities, kinds of grasses present and level of perfection demanded. Some associations have on file a record of courses surveyed for just the purpose you have in mind. Your own Michigan Turfgrass Foundation may be able to help you. There are other considerations that must be taken into account in determining 1) how many men and, 2) how much will it cost. Who takes care of the clubhouse grounds, the golf cars, etc. •