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Answers to turf questions

by Fred V. Grau

Do you know your superintendent?

One concept of the golf course superintendent conjures up the image of a man who usually can be found at the barn, who smells of gasoline and oil, who messes around with grubby things like topdressing and foul-smelling chemicals, who topdresses the greens the day before an important tournament and who insults members by enforcing club rules concerning carts. Is this accurate? Hardly!

Another, more modern, concept of the golf course superintendent brings to mind quite a different picture. He wears a white shirt, a tie and a jacket and drives a clean car to supervise operations. He has an office, a phone, filing cabinets and a secretary when needed. He knows members at sight at a distance and calls them by name when they play by.

Every plant, tree and flower on the golf course he knows by name and he can tell you when it was planted. He can tell you when the purple martins are due, when the wood ducks nest, when the quail are mating and why the bluebirds stay a few days and then move on! When the squirrels dig up the crocus bulbs and chew holes into the attic of the president's house, he calmly takes ap-

propriate action. He is busy every hour of every day but takes things in his stride.

His records show every detail of reseeding and plugging the fairways, of renovating the tees, fertilizing, what happened when the roughs were sprayed for weeds. Not a detail escapes him. He is concerned when differences of opinion arise among his employees, when he loses men to industry, when there isn't enough help to do the job. He practices public relations every hour, every day he is on the job.

When a mower is out of adjustment his practiced eye detects the flaws in the turf and corrective measures are taken at once. He knows when a green is slow or fast just by watching a player's ball from a distance. He is ever mindful of the comforts and the desires of the members. Some players, of course, cannot be pleased.

He is friendly with the golf professional; with the caddie master, with the club manager and consults frequently with the chairman of the green committee. He invites research people, fellow superintendents and friends from industry to have lunch with him—in the clubhouse—at the club's expense. He plays enough golf so that he knows how to manage the course to please the players. He takes time to visit surrounding

continued on page 30



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continued from page 28

experiment stations and other golf clubs. Conferences and field days are planned in advance and he takes the time and trouble to become involved in his local chapter and in the national association.

Our modern superintendent is a man of good standing in his community. His technical skills really are a small part of his total accomplishments. Neighbors can borrow his skills in creating better lawns and more attractive plantings. His influence extends far beyond the club's property lines. He is a very human person, a man of many skills, friendly and helpful, knowledgeable, well-read, and a pleasure to visit and converse with.

So, how well do you know your superintendent? Do you, the chairman or the president, encourage your superintendent to develop these many-sided skills and talents? Let us not forget that today's golf course superintendent is a mighty important person and, as he involves himself more and more, he becomes very nearly the indispensable employee.

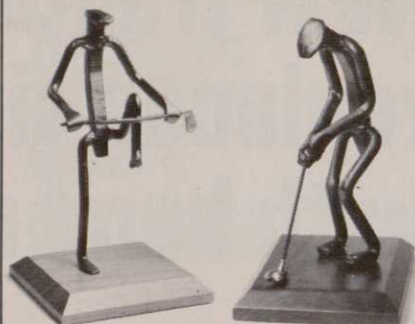
Q.—We have wondered about the apparent conflict between increased emphasis on irrigation of fairways and the possibility of developing improved grasses for non-irrigated fairways. Aren't we pulling in different directions? Isn't there a middle ground?

(Indiana)

A.—Because of the great pressure generated by the expansion of irrigation systems (no pun intended), research leans strongly toward solving the extra problems brought on by irrigation of turf not designed to utilize excess water. These problems are immediate and they have been brought on by demands of club members for green turf. Research had not pre-

continued on page 32

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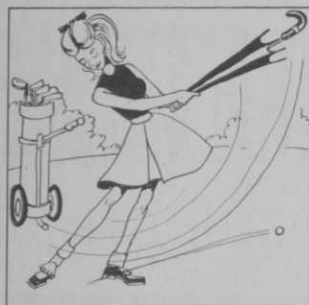
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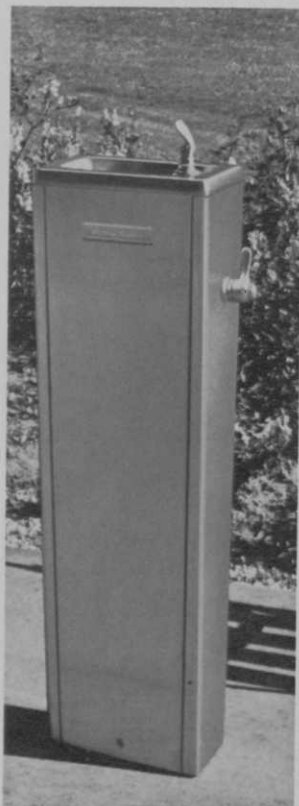
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continued from page 30

pared for these problems and the answers are not at once forthcoming. Certainly we do not have the grasses to meet the demands. Neither do we know how water should be managed for the kind of turf we have now.

In the absence of enough money to support research for both concepts, developing drought-tolerant, non-irrigated fairway turf must be relegated to a secondary position.

The "middle ground" is partly research and partly educational. We have some grasses for fairways that can produce excellent turf with far less water than is usually applied. When turf loses a little color, even though it is healthy and it provides excellent playing conditions, members are prone to pressure the superintendent into irrigating (or the super does it himself to avoid the criticism he knows will follow) even though it should not be watered at that time. "We have the water system—why don't we use it?" We may never be able to educate golfers to adopt a sensible approach to irrigation even though the superintendent knows what to do. A national water shortage could bring this about and in my opinion we ought to be ready. Water most certainly is not the final answer to green playable fairway turf.

Q.—Is "Turf Management" by Musser still available? Where can we get it?

(Nebraska)

A.—Yes, the book still is available. Parts of it are a bit outdated but nothing has been printed to take its place. See your golf course supplier—often he stocks this book for his customers. The United States Golf Assn., 40 East 38th Street, New York, N.Y. 10016, can supply you or advise you of the closest source. Most bookstores carry it. □