

Eddie Stimpson

He was only trying to bring objectivity to the game — not more headaches for superintendents

Superintendents may not admire him for what he did, but they should. Eddie Stimpson was only trying to bring objectivity and integrity to the game when he invented the Stimpmeter in 1935.

Stimpson, a Harvard graduate and golf enthusiast, invented the Stimpmeter after the controversy over green speed during the 1935 U.S. Open at Pennsylvania's Oakmont CC. Stimpson wanted to compare putting surfaces for consistency and fairness — not “how fast can we get 'em.”

Stimpson's son, Ed, says his father regarded the Stimpmeter as his greatest accomplishment. Eddie, who died at 80

in 1985, had no intention of making money off his invention and he never did.

We don't believe that Stimpson, the 1935 Massachusetts Amateur champion, believed his tool would cause such headaches for modern-day superintendents. We don't believe Stimpson envisioned that today's life-in-the-fast-lane green chairman would demand his superintendent to get the course's greens stimping at 11.5 to keep pace with the club down the street.

Stimpson's device was modified by the USGA's technical department in the mid-1970s and made available to superintendents in 1978. “It has proven to be an invaluable asset to the game of golf and a



ED STIMPSON JR.

helpful management tool for the superintendent, but it is not intended for course comparisons,” USGA says.

James Nicol, certified superintendent of Hazeltine National GC in Chaska, Minn., says Stimpson has had a positive and negative impact on the industry. “I believe the intended use of the Stimpmeter was to measure greens for their consistency relating to their speed, not speed alone,” he stresses.

But green committees and golfers abuse the Stimpmeter, Nicol says. Some carry Stimpmeters in their golf bags so they can take their own readings. Daily postings of Stimpmeter readings at clubs are trendy.

“Because of television, most golfers believe the greens they observe on weekends are at those speeds on a weekly basis,” Nicol says. “But most players can't tell the difference between [a reading of] 9.5 feet and 10.5 feet.”

Terry Bonar, certified superintendent of Canterbury GC in Beachwood, Ohio, says there would still be green-speed issues even if Stimp never invented his tool. “If it wasn't him, it would have been someone or something else,” he adds.

But the Stimpmeter is not a bad thing, Bonar says. “Better technology makes it possible to improve in every part of our society, and demand makes it necessary.”

— Larry Aylward, Editor

Schilling also led an effort to extend and expand the association's outreach overseas.

Schilling says the most rewarding part of his tenure was helping with the development and recognition of the association as a major player in the golf industry. “We had a membership that wanted a stronger national organization in representing them in government and employment issues,” he says.

Schilling began his career at GCSAA in 1978. He worked his way to the top of the staff serving in communication, publications, information services, marketing and sales, and the conference and show. He was also associate executive director.

Under Schilling, the GCSAA conference and trade show more than doubled in attendance from 7,142 in 1983 to 15,309 in 1994, with nearly 60 seminars and 6,560 exhibits. One of sev-

eral keys to the burgeoning event was Schilling's insistence on high quality printed materials and marketing strategies.

Association membership more than doubled during Schilling's reign from 5,655 in 1983 to 13,113 in 1993. Along with that progress came:

- Stronger financial conditions.
- Stepped-up efforts to provide more technical resources and access to the best turfgrass scientists, researchers and educators.
- Stronger fundraising for scholarship and research.
- A government relations program to monitor regulations affecting superintendents.

“I had a fabulous time at GCSAA,” says Schilling, who now operates a printing business near Lawrence, Kan. “We had a great team.”

— Clay Loyd, Contributor