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Plan Off-Season Work While Traffic Is Heavy

By LEO J. FESER

Surely Shakespeare let poetry flow from his quill when he entitled his comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Notes taken by the modern golf course superintendent during July and August savor more of the nightmare.

Twentieth century chemistry has given the man in charge of the golf course a number of magic potions to ease his dread of dead and dying turf, but for him, mid-summer will never be a time of sweet tranquility. Nevertheless, notes taken at that time provide an accurate basis for action that may well make future dreams more pleasant.

Philosophical acceptance of the fact that the height of the golfing season in Northern parts of our country coincides with the period of difficult time for turf, does not alter the fact that the days of the Northern golfer's year are numbered. The efficient superintendent strives to give the best possible during these limited days, and the wise green chairman will use his influence to permit maximum efficiency. All the resources of labor, materials, equipment and skill are required to do the job at hand. Despite the urgency for action, it is probable that the greatest single service a superintendent can render at that time is thru the judicious use of notebook and pencil.

Note the Needed Work

Notes taken on observations of players, facilities and equipment during the mid-summer nightmare afford an excellent basis for fall and winter work. Player congestion during the peak season may have been caused by a narrow path that Indians only should use. Trees and shrubs that added nothing but player annoyance should get the attention they deserve. Rough that caught only the pop flies caused more loss of time hunting than Teddy Roosevelt spent in Africa. That green with the steep pitch that caused hole-high balls to roll ten feet onto the apron when putted down may now be in for a face-lifting.

How about player comfort when the sun was high and hot? Those gasping golfers who crossed yards and yards of sandy waste, hoping to find life-giving water over the next rise, will be back again next year. A nice drinking fountain or two that will spout forth when touched will make the superintendent who

installed it as popular as Moses when he smote the rock. The notes may recall those sudden thunderstorms that drenched the customers and sent their questionable hearts pounding as they dashed like Sheridan, with shelter 20 miles away. They may also cause to be recalled that apprehensive, longing, pressing and finally desperate searching for a haven on the part of the unfortunate who could no longer bluff nature's call. These notes call for a shelter house with another one further back, or better yet, a possible combination job.

Tips from Locker-room Wails

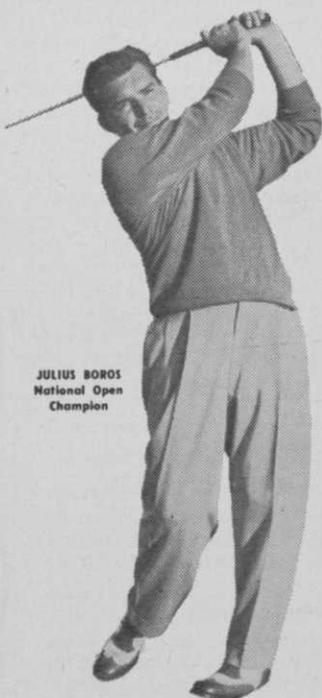
The bewitching bellyaching in the locker-room during the season's top should not be overlooked. Notes taken on the condemnation proceedings of this court of no appeal will no doubt provide much basic material for course improvement. (Incidentally, notes taken at that time will provide heavy ammunition for the annual battle of the budget. The locker-room griper will not long remember what he said there, but with adequate notes, a good green chairman will never forget what he did there.) All locker-room complaints are not simple gripes, however, and many excellent improvements have been made in playing facilities because somebody was willing to do something about them.

Let's step off of the course proper for a moment, and see what might be done to make our people happier. There never has been and perhaps never will be a perfect parking area. This highly important space is always subject to improvement; it might be extended. (Always extend parking areas toward the front entrance of the club house, even if the removal of a pillar or two is necessary. Golfers who cheerfully hike three miles playing, usually find it exceedingly difficult to drag themselves more than 30 feet from car to canopy.) Resurfacing of the area may add to its usability and life. Parking design and markings should receive some attention. Roadways do a big job; consider them.

Other Off-Course Problems

Another off-course problem that will defy the genius of three or more wise men is the caddy business. The superintendent who is willing to give some thought and time to possible improve-

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ments in housing, playgrounds, sanitary facilities, refreshment facilities and traffic routes for caddies, will minimize future aggravations from this ever-present source. Traffic routes of caddies are but a part of the total foot-traffic problems. The clubhouse, pro-shop, bag-cart storage rooms, lawns, pool and tennis courts all demand definite traffic routes, some of which may be beneficially modified as much as present-day cloverleaves modify the flow of vehicular movements.

Back to the course proper again, it seems almost presumptive to suggest items for consideration of the green chairman and the superintendent. With the opening of schools and colleges, the young blood will be leaving the golf course labor ranks, and the dearth of labor we experienced last spring will again be a reality.

A few principles might be suggested that will help with the vexing question of deciding where available labor can best be used. So far we have considered some of the desirable extra-curricular improvements that could be made to keep our people happier. It is well to keep in mind that there are many essential items in maintaining the golf plant that must receive consideration after the midsummer nightmare.

The most essential consideration is that of turf. Areas that were damaged can not be ignored. Sodding and seeding must be done. Here it is well to consider the factors that brought on the damage. If caused by a solvable traffic problem, it is obviously better to solve the problem than continue to struggle with the effect. Likewise, if poor varieties of grass went out, they should be replaced with better ones. If excessive shade or moisture is responsible for the injury, correct the condition. A simple workable rule: "Correct the cause; the cure is costly."

There are many good, playable golf courses that require but a fraction of the time and labor required to maintain others. This is, of course, due to a number of factors, some of which cannot be controlled. But it is apparent that the course designed to use power equipment efficiently has an advantage over the one where much hand work is necessary. Where alterations that will permit the reasonable use of more economical equipment can be made, it is poor business to neglect making them. Likewise, if the equipment used is not economical in operation, more money goes down the sewer.

Figuring the Costs

No plan for fall and winter work can be worthy of the paper it is written on, unless the equipment and facilities available to do the job are of high efficiency. The superintendent and green chairman who are responsible for the execution of

any plan of alteration must carefully consider the choice of method. Purchase of good equipment for making alterations has oftentimes saved clubs good money on a specific job, and the equipment was left in club ownership, ready for the next job. On the other hand, it is obviously poor business to invest in costly equipment that will depreciate in value at a rate higher than outside contractors would charge for the use of their equipment. The choice must be made by the responsible parties after all factors are considered.

The ability and ingenuity of the men who care for our golf plants, coupled with the work done by reserach people and manufacturers, has kept the cost of golf maintenance within reasonable limits despite general inflation. There remains much to be done. If the trend is to continue toward better quality, intelligent planning and efficient execution of those plans are of fundamental importance.

The loosely organized business of golf is complicated by weather, climate, soil, economic condition, terrain, labor availability, and technological problems without number. Planning progress despite complications is the job faced by the green chairman and the superintendent. Pope said it well, "A mighty maze! but not without a plan."

Field Days and Conferences

- Aug. 5—Field Day, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N. J.
- Aug. 20-21—Field Day, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, R. I.
- Sept. 3-4—Field Day, Pennsylvania State College, State College, Pa.
- Sept. 24—Field Day, Greater Cincinnati Golfers' League and Cincinnati Golf Course Superintendents.
- Oct. 6-7—Turf Conference, University of California, Los Angeles, Calif.
- Oct. 9-10—Turf Conference, University of California, Berkeley, Calif.
- Oct. 13-14—Turf Conference, Washington State College, Pullman, Wash.
- Oct. 22-24—Third Turf Conference, Central Plains Turf Foundation and Kansas State College, Manhattan, Kans.
- Nov. 17-21—American Society of Agronomy meetings, Netherlands Plaza Hotel, Cincinnati, Ohio.
- Dec. 1-3—Texas Turf Conference, Texas A & M College, College Station, Texas.

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Individual practice absorbs the interest of more than 50 members of a girl's golf class at Central high school in Minneapolis. Individual help and practice is combined with group instruction to give every class member the most training possible in the short course offered free to the seniors during the spring semester by the park board pros.

Minneapolis Builds Munny Play With Free Winter Lessons

By WILLIAM GILBERTSON

Despite thick blankets of snow and ice covering every inch of grass in Minneapolis, the golf season for this northern city starts early—the first of February, usually—for thousands of local golfers.

As a result of the early start, the five Minneapolis public golf courses are always comfortably filled with hundreds of golfers when the warm balmy spring days roll around.

What's behind it?

It's the result of carefully-planned, early-season golf promotion and instruction through a plan first adopted in 1938 by the recreation division of the Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners, which after 16 successful years still enjoys ever-growing popularity.

Postwar recreation activity in this city has boomed, and golf has boomed right along with the rest. The boom in golf interest and the sound promotion program have built interest to the point where community golfers play near 200,000 rounds per year on the five public courses.

In 1938, golf in Minneapolis was suf-

fering from disinterest and play was low—a partial result of the after-effects of the depression years.

Three-fold Program

To revive golf in the city, a three-fold program was put into effect.

The three-pronged attack included (1) free pre-season golf lessons for all comers, especially beginners, (2) club-organizing at the five city courses and (3) tournament promotion on a wide scale.

Recreation director Karl B. Raymond explains the purpose of the program was actually two-fold. He says:

"We wanted to bring back the popularity of golf and full use of our golf facilities, and we also wanted to utilize, in a worthwhile, year-round way, our professional managers. We believed we could build a better, more permanent base for a rising interest in golf and the use of our courses."

The program's first year, helped by favorable weather, saw the total rounds played increase to 150,413 for the season, a jump of 17,500 over the previous year.

In that first year, golf schools were

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conducted at eight city community centers, beginning in March and continuing until the outdoor season started on the courses. A total of 590 attended those first lessons and another 3,250 viewed films on golf.

Ninety-seven tournaments were conducted in the first year to build up interest in golf.

Since that first encouraging year, the program has been carried on every winter without a break. Attendance and participation were hindered some years by cold, rainy golf seasons, the second World War and other ups and downs.

The war's end saw a big build-up in golf's popularity from recreation-starved war veterans and civilians alike. By 1948, Minneapolis golfers were playing 203,208 rounds in one season at only five courses. That was topped by 203,784 rounds in 1950.

Throughout its 16-year history, the golf promotion program has been improved considerably and many of the weaknesses eliminated.

High School Short Course Added

In 1946 a formerly-neglected goldmine of prospective golfers was welcomed into the program for the first time with the addition of a high school short course in golf taught by the same park board pros who were teaching the winter pre-season golf lessons at the centers.

Fitting the park board's golf instruction into the high school program gave very little trouble. The golf lessons, once per week for three weeks, were given during regular physical education hours, with the very helpful and interested cooperation of the school faculty. The schools were pleased to have experienced professionals teaching golf fundamentals to their students. Golf proved to be a very popular and healthy addition to their program.

Co-educational classes were attempted for a time at one school but were soon found less effective than separate classes. Beginning golfers were far less distracted and absorbed far more golf when in class with members of their own sex.

At present, the high school program starts the first week in February with the beginning of a new spring semester in the schools.

The three park board pros teach golf in all 11 of the city high schools, usually limiting classes to only senior boys and girls. Three men alone couldn't possibly teach all sophomores, juniors and seniors. They've more than enough golf pupils with only the seniors.

An all-city total of 3,000 boys and girls, each of which is to receive three lessons, makes careful, tight scheduling essential in order to fit in all schools. Classes av-

erage about 50 pupils. Fifty minute periods are the standard.

Free Golf Schools for Public

Meanwhile, popularity of the free golf schools for the public at the community centers grows yearly. Some expedient changes have been made since the first trial in 1938.

Instead of the original eight different centers, classes for 1952 were conducted in only three convenient centers, located to draw beginning and veteran golfers from all over the city. Columbia Manor serves the north section, Loring park center, in the heart of the loop, attracts many of the nearby apartment dwellers, and Nicollet field center operates in the south district of the city.

Free lessons at these three centers begin in mid-February, about two weeks after those in the schools. Classes at each center are held evenings at 6:45 and 8:15 p.m.

Class-size at the centers also averages about 50 golfers each, with two separate classes per night timed so working people have a choice of hours.

For the first time this year, two separate series of three lessons for each center were conducted, the second series following as soon as the first three-week set had finished. Formerly, only one series of four was held at each center.

The change was made to eliminate a "drag" effect always encountered in the four-session series. Good first-night classes would show up for the first of the four sessions and receive their preliminary lesson—usually films and simple introductory explanations. Golfers returning home that night would tell friends about the fun they were having and the golf lessons they were getting free. Presto! The second weekly session of the four almost always doubled, with at least half of the people coming for the first time. This required repeating the whole introductory process and slowing up the rest of the class.

Now, when first-nighters enjoy their lessons (which is frequent), they may suggest to friends, "Why don't you start the second series?" Delay and repetition are eliminated and the word also spreads more widely. The three instructing pros believe as much can be taught in three lessons without any delays as was formerly possible with four and much back-tracking.

The second series also benefits from larger crowds as approaching golf weather turns the public fancy once more to green, grassy fairways soon to be seen.

More than 600 golfers for the two series were taught this season at the centers, 300 in each series.

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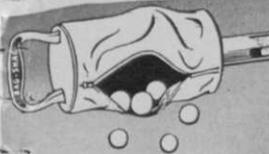
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centers for the adults is much the same. More previous golf experience is found among those pupils at the centers, which allows starting more advanced instruction with certain students.

In the schools, very few (seldom more than one or two out of a class of 50) have had any previous experience in golf, while the rates at the centers run to about 40 to 45 per cent. Age limits at the centers are not strictly observed, but only a serious interest and a reasonably good ability to absorb the training are required.

3,600 Beginners Get 10,000 Lessons

Totaling up the individual pupils from these two sources, the schools and community centers, we have over 3,600 avid golf students, most of them beginners. Multiply that by the three lessons which each receives in only two short months.



This trio has taught over 63,000 individual lessons in the Minneapolis park board's free golf school program since its start in 1938. (L to R) Donald Nelson, Lake Hiawatha GC, Fred Herrmann, Francis Gross GC and Paul Elmer, Meadowbrook GC.

How would you, aided by only two others, teach this total 10,800 lessons. It's really not so tough. Minneapolis' three park pros have taught that many yearly for 16 winter seasons now.

The secret is the use of both group and individual instruction.

Here's the plan.

Standard procedure is to start with films on golf fundamentals, the history of golf, golf etiquette and other subjects obtained from the films of the National Golf Foundation.

Next the students watch actual demonstrations of these same points by instructors standing before the group. Slow careful explanation is essential. Questions from the pupils are welcomed, often asked, and little is overlooked as a result.

Next the class turns to individual practice. Each goes over what he's seen in the movies and demonstrations and copied right along himself. Every student is

watched and carefully checked for proper form in all fundamentals, including the stance, grip, addressing the ball, swing, putting, and driving.

"How do you start around the course" or "Who has first turn on the greens?" Customs and general golf etiquette on the courses are also well covered in demonstrations, talks and questioning periods.

The three instructors manage to get to every pupil in every class during every lesson with very rare exceptions. They check each through his paces to be sure he develops a good firm idea of what's right and what isn't. That's the main purpose of the course—to develop a good basic idea and picture of what proper form is for the fundamentals.

When a warm April 1 dawns in Minneapolis, the "Winter golf" ceases and the three pros return to their respective courses to make everything ready for that big opening day.

What's the final effect when that opening day does come? They pack 'em in! Why?

By opening day the feel of a golf club in the hands is already fresh for both beginners and veterans, and the pre-season lessons easily preserve the strange springtime malady, "fairway fever," during the short interval before the courses are ready.

In short, many new "golf addicts" have been converted by indoor, "Winter golf," which entices the beginning golfer out on the real course as soon as he can tear himself away. And he's as eager as the next guy to go! Good lessons and individual help during the critical "breaking-in" period add large numbers of new golfers to tee reservation lists each year.

And what kind of golfers are they?

All of these newly-converted novices at least acquire a clear and accurate picture of proper golf form. They learn at least a few things about golf rules, techniques, playing according to rules and general golf "know-how" which they would have had to pick up more painfully and less sympathetically on the course, were it not for these free golf schools.

Winter Lessons Build Confidence

These beginners escape much of the surprisingly serious and discouraging embarrassment usually considered one of the necessary tortures of starting in a sport such as golf. They're not forced to learn in a "sink or swim" effort among expert golfers on the fairways who may not be so tolerant of breaches of golf etiquette by unschooled beginners. Winter lessons tend to make beginners more relaxed and confident with the background and fundamentals they've picked up.

Many golfers who have carried through with the idea of the program and devel-