

The Grass Roots

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President's Message

Most of us have been exposed to the winter weather long enough and are anxiously awaiting the upcoming golf season. Equipment restoration and replacement is nearly completed and the supplies that were ordered in large quantities are about to be received. By reviewing our past programs, obtaining new knowledge and conferring with other Superintendents we will attempt to admin-

ister the 1978 management programs we have planned during the winter months. Last year presented a variety of problems for many golf courses and Superintendents and I'm sure we all know and appreciate the fact that hindsight is 20-20 vision. Thus, we won't, or at least shouldn't, make the same mistakes twice.

Hopefully, everyone has or is plan-

ning to complete the certification process of Phase II for Category 3 [Ornamental and Turf Pesticide Application]. In addition, if you plan to use algacides in your lakes, you must complete Category 5 [Aquatic Weed Control]. If you do not complete the Phase II process you cannot legally purchase or apply any "restricted-use" pesticides, which will include many of the materials used on golf course turf. For more information contact:

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Rebuttal - "Green is not Great"

The following article originally appeared in letter form as a rebuttal to Al Radko's article, "Green is not Great" (USGA Golf Journal, August, 1977). The author is James A. Bertoni, Golf Course Superintendent at La Jolla Country Club, La Jolla, California and President of the San Diego Golf Course Superintendents Association.

Editor

Golf has changed considerably since the first pin was placed during the fifteenth century. The maturation process began in 1944 when the "Honorable Company of Edinburgh Golfers" formulated thirteen articles as the original rules of golf. In 1764, St. Andrews reduced it's course from twenty-two to eighteen holes. Some claim this was the number of holes which a Scotsman found necessary to drain a flask of spirits. This reduction set the standard for all courses in the future.

The original rules were simple: Play the course as you find it and the ball as it lies. There were no special rulings because an errant shot landed behind an immovable object. There were no provisions for "embedded balls", "lift, clean and place" or "Ground under Repair". The golfer played by the axiom, "touch your ball when teeing it up and do not touch it again until it has been holed out".

Unfortunately, the modern golfer has had his hands on the ball more often than not. Relief from nearly every unsatisfactory situation confronted is allowed. Today's player is not only allowed relief, but can conceivably move his ball over fourteen feet, including two club lengths for the drop and the additional two that the ball may roll, to secure the desired alleviation.

Several Superintendents from Wisconsin attend the Midwest Regional Turf Foundation conference at Purdue University each year. This is an excellent meeting and, if possible, get a "car-full" together and attend the conference from March 13 to March 15, 1978.

See you at West Bend Country Club on March 22.

Wayne Otto

Congratulations!

Congratulations to Jeff Bottensek, Golf Course Superintendent at Waupaca Country Club and Paul Cooper, Golf Course Superintendent at Rhinelander Country Club for successfully completing the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America process and becoming Certified Golf Course Superintendents.

Rebuttal continued. . . .

Al Radko believes that too many Golf Course Superintendents are following the path of least resistance rather than standing up and saying, "You are wrong! My program is the best long range direction for the club, we'll do it my way completely and totally." ["Green is not Great", August, 1977, USGA Golf Journal]. However, the contention can be made that the Superintendent is not yielding to pressure from the membership but following the dictates of the United States Golf Association. Each year, the USGA is responsible for a voluminous publication, entitled, Decision on the Rules of Golf by the USGA. It seems that with the very first "decision" it was golf's ruling body that chose to follow the "path of least resistance" rather than honor the basic premises of playing the course as found and the ball as it lies.

The reason for the trend away from the "purist" attitude is simple. As the game of golf progressed in the United States, Americans found the original standards too tasking. "Rub of the Green" was more than the golfer was willing to endure and has been reduced to such trivial occurrences as hitting the ball farther than anticipated and ending up in a hazard. It then becomes the fault of the Golf Course Superintendent because the course is too dry.

Time and time again, the Superintendent has heard from the golfer, "I only ask one thing from a golf course. . . consistency." Assuming that the turf manager follows Mr. Radko's "survival of the fittest" management

philosophy, how is consistency to be maintained? Obviously there would be browned out areas as well as patches of healthy green turf. The proficient golfer, whose shot ends up in an area of verdant growth would complain about the inequity of the situation when less than three feet away is the dormant turf and perfect lies that he desires. The high handicapper who lands in a browned out area, when he is surrounded by healthy green grass also bemoans his situation. In both instances, the Superintendent is to blame for failure to achieve consistency because of his "survival of the fittest" programs.

This attitude has been encouraged by the USGA in their Decisions on the Rules of Golf. To provide these playing conditions, the Golf Course Superintendent has two alternatives: Either all turf is killed or all turf is grown similarly to attain the same color, texture and playability. A golf operation with no turf has very little chance of success, thus the individual

responsible for maintenance of the course must strive for evenly textures, healthy sod by way of forced management.

The Superintendent's contention should be that the extensive programs employed on golf courses are a result of the dictates of the United States Golf Association itself, through its "decisions". The burden of "purist" has been placed solely on the Golf Course Superintendent's shoulders. Intense, extensive maintenance is not the problem, but only the end product of the Decisions on the Rules of Golf by the USGA.

Golfers, club officials and the USGA cannot expect golf course maintenance to change unless the "decisions" are re-evaluated. "Survival of the Fittest" will only result in uneven growth and patches of live, dead and dormant turf, never satisfying the requirement for equality.

Golf has seen many changes in all aspects of the game. Equipment has become much more sophisticated, architecture has turned from the early "penal" design to the "strategic" concept, and interpretations of the rules have made the two basic premises somewhat obscure. Course management has kept pace with these changes. However, it is possible that the decisions have gone too far. The first lenient ruling contrary to the standards set at St. Andrews created the monster. To place the blame for assorted so-called inequities in playing conditions on the Golf Course Superintendent is unfair.

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