



THE GRASS ROOTS

an official publication of the Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association

Volume XIV, No. 3

May/June 1987 Issue

Documentation IS Important!

CHANGING TIMES

By Thomas R. Harrison

Golf course management has endured tremendous changes over the last 50 years. Playability and conditioning of today's courses is at fantastically high levels. Comparisons between today's courses and those of only 30 years ago are dramatic. The changes that have been made and the forces that dictated these changes have been erratic. Advances in maintenance practices have come in spells. When golf is in a boom period and interest is high, changes have come at a rapid pace. When the economy or other factors are on a downturn, then the changes in conditioning demands are slowed accordingly.

In performing my job, as superintendent at Maple Bluff Country Club, I like to see my work progress in an orderly fashion. I like to have goals and targets to reach with well defined levels of maintenance to aim for. I like to anticipate changes in priorities and standards so that work will proceed smoothly without major disruption. I find it most aggravating when the levels of maintenance or what is expected of me in my job changes and I am not informed. It is most annoying to be chastised for poor playing conditions when the standards are changing and we are struggling to achieve these undefined levels of maintenance.

In the early fall of 1978 I was faced with a very trying dilemma. My greens committee was very unhappy with the condition of our course. The greens were too slow, the fairways too long, and the course in general was too wet. I felt helpless about the whole situation. I had an old manual irrigation system that leaked from corroded pipe. I mowed fairways with large gang mowers that were the norm for their day. I kept the course "green" and beautiful as I previously had been educated by the main body of members to do. I did the best I could with the guidelines and tools I was given. But the desired playing conditions and standards of maintenance were being changed. No planning was implemented to achieve these changes nor was I fully aware of what the membership truly wanted. My committee wanted things done that I knew would spell disaster if implemented immediately. The playing conditions they wanted, if sought too quickly, would transform the beautiful golf course into a brown, ugly parcel of land that would certainly get me fired because of the lack of

planning and membership involvement. I resisted their initial demands for immediate change, with the backing of the Board of Directors, but I could see that planning would have to begin to get a true reading of membership demands and then to set a timetable for completing the work. Better greens speed, drier fairways with tighter lies, and an improved irrigation system would have to be addressed.

The changes in fairway conditions would be fairly simple, given a good sum of money. We needed to better distribute our water with a new irrigation system and we needed to replace our old heavy fairway mowers with lightweight equipment. By 1984 we had accomplished all this. The course improvements were dramatic and the membership noticed the changes immediately even though it took seven years to complete.

Lowering the greens speed was a tougher matter however. More money would not be a factor. The greens needed to be fertilized less, cut a little tighter after they

Continued on page 22.

Changing Times	1
President's Message	2
Editorial	3
An Architects Opinion	7
Golf Course; Hazardous Waste	8
The Steward Conference	10
Jottings from the Golf Course Journal	12
From the Director's Desk	15
Shop Talk	16
A Player's Perspective	19
"The Grass Roots" Wins Award	21
The Other Plants	26
Wisconsin Pathology Report	29
Gypsy Invasion	32
Gypsy Moth Trapping Cooperation	33
1987 WTA Field Day Set	34
The Final Chapter To A Miserable Story	34
NorAm Presents Scholarship	35
Membership Applications	35
Reinders Host Conference	37
Wisconsin Soils Report	38
Golf Course Design Principles	41
Turf Club	41
News Clippings	43
Spreading the Breeze	44