



# The Other Side of the Coin

By Doug Vogel, Golf Course Superintendent, Packanack Golf Course

*Editor's Note: We have read a lot about soft spikes in the last few years, and in my career, they have been among the best innovations to improve putting green quality. But, as Doug Vogel points out in this article from The Greenside, there are other view points. His article appears here with permission from Ken Krausz, editor of The Greenside, official publication of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of New Jersey. It was in September/October 1999, Volume 22, No. 5 issue of The Greenside.*

"All the ballyhoo over spikeless golfies is just a bunch of poppycock," claims Professor Emeritus Chamberlain of the Department of Interdisciplinary Turfgrass Culture at Kent University located in Croton-on-Thames, England. "The greenkeepers have been led to believe that spikes are wreaking havoc on their links, but our study shows this not to be totally true."

The debate over spikeless golfing shoes vs. the traditional spiked variety has now gone from one of aesthetics to one of growing turf. Dr. Chamberlain conducted a three-year study on the effects of the two types of spikes have on both fescue and bentgrass putting surfaces. His conclusions shed new light on the controversial topic.

From his study, Chamberlain found the spikeless cleat to have 62% more surface area, which formed the basis for his following conclusions:

1. Because of the larger surface area, damage to the coleoptile increases 37%.
2. Leaf sheaths are being

crushed instead of pierced, which is creating discoloration in the fescues.

3. The separation of the ligule from the leaf blade increased 14%, thereby increasing chances of fungal entrance by 74%.

"Many of my fellow researchers have focused much too much on the edaphic environment of the turf plant. While the layering created an 1/4" by metal spikes may have some validity we all know that cultural practices exist to remedy this. My concern is we are overlooking plant parts above the soil. I hope my research proves this."

The animated professor jokingly concluded, "The links supervisors shouldn't be so quick to praise the value of the spikeless. Forget about all the biased data. Just

think about a green with no spike marks. What is the golfer going to blame his missed putts on now? I'll tell you - they'll be back at the pub downing their pints and cursing the greenkeep." 🍀

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