

HISTORIAN'S CORNER

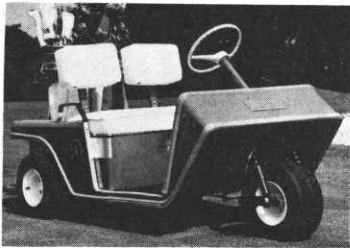
The following is an article written by Charles Erickson in February 1932 as part of a short course Turf Conference at the University of Minnesota.

I listened with pleasure to Emil Picha's talk on the care and upkeep of greens and golf courses during this present day.

Nearly all of us know, especially we older men, that there is always something new to learn, something which we are not familiar with.

To bring out this point I am going to give you an idea of how we boys did things in olden days, that is thirty years ago or better, when I was first greenkeeper. There wasn't very much at that time.

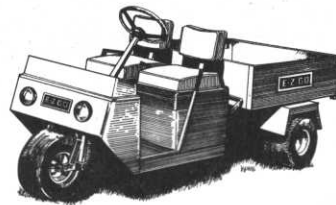
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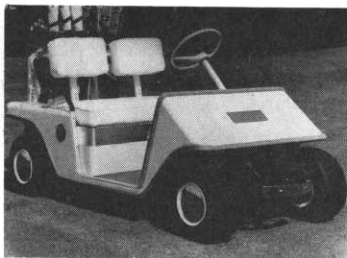
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We never tried to remodel our greens as there was nothing to laying out a golf course or do much changing except in cases where there was a lot of timber. On the prairies it came in very handy and that is what we started out with at our good old Minikahda Club. After the greens and the course were made we just cut out the greens with a common lawn mower and then rolled them. We didn't even know enough to top dress them. If they were a little low in places we raised the sod and filled in that way.

If there was grass that wasn't quite so good we went out on the course, took a hand sod cutter and picked up the best we could see and replaced it on our greens. Then we had to roll them. That is the lesson I heard every day, "Charlie, have you rolled the greens?" I made a roller out of cement, it weighed 900 pounds, but the committee told me it wasn't heavy enough. We finally got a heavy fairway roller, which I still use, and that weighs 2800 pounds. I had four men and we had to pull that on the greens. Not so easy, believe me. We had to push and pull. There were a couple of greens that were very sloping so I took a team of horses and a long rope and they gave us a lift, pulling it on the sloping greens and we pulled it back by hand power.

We never thought of top dressing or fertilizing. When the grass was worn out, due to so much rolling, we had to replace it again. This lasted for a little while, but I found out that something else had to be done. I went out in the woods and got some wonderful dirt and started to top dress, which helped me considerably.
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Our water pressure was very low because the piping was in when I came out there and it was only 3/4" piping for 400 yards, so you can readily see what I was up against. We couldn't even get the sprinkler to turn around. We had to water mostly by hand which took a long time and we had to haul water for two greens where we had no pipes.

The greens were as hard as a country road but one thing I must say is that I was never troubled with worm cast at that time, due to the fact that they were so hard.

I used common lawn mixture for grass seed in those days, that is blue grass and redtop, and then we had a mixture of crabgrass and dandelions besides that.

When I wanted the grass to thicken I always used a little clover because it was quick to germinate and filled in rapidly on the poor places. I certainly have to give the good old U.S.G.A. a lot of credit for the wonderful work they have done for us greenkeepers. They are really the ones who put light on the golf courses today and we have to admit it.

I also want to say something about our fairway. I had four men and four mowers, one man and a horse to each mower. Probably some of you older men will remember that. It took me a whole week to go over and cut my course. It was a slow, tiresome job. The men had to walk behind the mowers and when the greenkeeper wasn't around, they took their time. That is the way things were done years ago. We never saw a clean golf course. The old clippings were laying all over the course from the mowers. Lots of times we had to take the whole crew and clean up.

We had the same trouble in our long grass. Of course we cut this with a hay mower, then we had to go through the same performance, raking and piling it up. The next day you could see the hay all over the country. The members got their golf balls in the hay and you could hear all kinds of language, and we couldn't blame them.

I want to give many thanks to the manufacturing companies who have helped us in so many ways with mowers, tractors and all equipment to serve every item that is needed for our golf courses. We can now satisfy our good club and it is a pleasure to have a well kept course. You enjoy it and they are proud of you by so doing.

I have a word - it is very small - but it is big to me and that is "Love". If you love your club and your chairman I will guarantee you are going to save your good club quite a sum through the season.

I heard one of our good greenkeepers say in New York, "Be on the job". That's worth bearing in mind. It means a lot to you and to your club. Don't put the entire burden on your chairman - take a little responsibility on your own shoulders - satisfy your club and you will be satisfying yourself.

We greenkeepers have to study our problems all the time. We have to know a little of everything. We have to be blacksmiths, tanners, carpenters, bricklayers, stone masons, etc. We have to be able to take care of all these little details that come our way.

We also have to keep on the look out for brown patch, scold worms, ants, in fact all disease of the grasses. In other words, we are doctors of the green.

But all in all, it's fun being a greenkeeper. I have been at it thirty years - but then I have heard people say the first hundred are the hardest, so I still have a long row to hoe.