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# Mid-Atlantic Newsletter



Published by:

Mid-Atlantic Association of Golf Course Superintendents to aid in the Advancement of the  
Golf course Superintendent through Education and Merit

Volume XXXIV

April 1981

No. 2

## The Perils of Playing on Freeze-Dried Greens

By Joe Gambatese

Golfers anxious to loosen up their winter-rusted swing were delighted this week when the temperatures rose into the 50's and 60's. But not the golf course superintendent. He was in a tough spot and deserved sympathy and understanding rather than being the target of criticism.

Its the superintendent's job to keep golfers happy by providing greens that are in good condition during the playing season. Naturally, he wants to keep them from being damaged during the winter. There is no problem in cold weather; walking on frozen greens by a few golfers causes little damage. But when the surface thaws and the turf underneath remains frozen, as happened this week, watch out.

"When frozen greens get mushy, walking on them does more than create bumps," says Dr. Fred V. Grau of the Musser International Turfgrass Foundation, former director of the USGA Green Section. "It disrupts the root system, which can't be repaired until spring."

Woodmont's superintendent, Bob Shields, national president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association in 1965, feels that surface damage – the footprints – are not a big problem.

"We can fix footprints," he explains. "But we can't fix the grass roots which die because walking on thawed greens breaks the stems from the roots that are frozen in the ground."

Bill Black has warned his Congressional members of the compaction that results from walking on a frozen green whose surface has thawed.

"Fertilization becomes less efficient, water cannot penetrate properly, and the green will no longer support a quality bentgrass much less a well-hit golf shot," he wrote in the club's newsletter.

At Columbia, George Thompson builds good temporary greens in the fall, top-dressing and seeding them with rye grass so that the members will more readily accept them when their use becomes necessary.

"We shouldn't let a few winter golfers spoil the greens for the greater number of members who want to enjoy good greens in the spring," he contends.

At Kenwood, where temporary greens – and tees – are used all winter regardless of any thawing, members have divided opinions.

"Temporary greens stink," exclaims Marty McHugh.

"I don't mind them," says Jack Weber, with support from Perry Lippitt.

"If I can't play the regular greens," says Fred Parson, "I don't play at all."

The final word, of course, belongs to Kenwood superintendent John Henley and

Mike

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## April 14th Meeting Talbot C. C.

The April 14th meeting will be at the Talbot Country Club, Easton, Md. Your host, Ralph McNeal, was born and raised in Talbot County and was a dairy farmer before going to work at the country club in June



1963. Ralph, being a farmer and hard worker, knew how to make things grow. Through self-education in the turf field and the services of the USGA representative, Holman Griffin, he has done an outstanding job.

The golf course was originally a nine hole course and was opened in 1910. In 1962 the services of Edmund Ault was acquired to add nine holes and re-arrange the original nine holes into an 18 hole championship layout. The work was begun in 1963 and the course opened for play in the spring of 1964. All work was done by Ralph McNeal through a local contractor, Mr. Robert Coleman. The greens average about 9,500 to 10,000 square feet and are Penncross Bent, cut 3/16 of an inch. Tees were Merion and creeping red but over a period of time have become part bermuda and it is Ralph's thoughts to encourage the bermuda.

The fairways are rye, red top and creeping red fescue, mowed about 1 1/4 inch. The rough is a tight set of K31 fescue and mowed about 2 1/2 to 3 inches. The irrigation system is manual.

Every winter six or seven fairways are spread with horse manure from Ralph's wife's riding school and horse farm. In addition, there are all the wild goose droppings from thousands of wild geese that find Talbot Country Club to be their home away from home. It is not uncommon to see the course, including clubhouse lawn, swimming pool area and practice green completely covered by geese. Can you imagine the odor and the pile around the shoe cleaning brushes at the locker room entrance? How about the operators of the cutting units? They eat outside where the air can circulate.

At the pro shop you will be greeted by a very congenial golf professional, Frank Hepler. He or his people will collect your car rentals, tournament fees and dinner costs.

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## President's Message

I'd like to thank the membership for electing me president for 1981. I will serve to the best of my ability. I'd also like to congratulate last years educational chairman, Bob Orazi and the Maryland Turfgrass Council



for putting on another great Turfgrass 81.

The March meeting was a great success. My thanks to our host at Farmington, Dick Fisher. Educational Chairman, Jerry Gerard arranged to have Houston Couch as speaker. He reviewed many fungicides, there uses and how often we should use them.

As always, the Mid-Atlantic looks forward to traveling to Talbot Country Club. Ralph McNeal always hosts a great meeting. It will also be the start of our annual Match Play Tournament. Let's have a big turn out and enjoy another dose of that great eastern shore hospitality.

Looking ahead to next month, be sure to make arrangements with your Golf Professional to play in the Superintendent-Pro Tournament on May 12, at the Naval Academy. This is the opportunity for you and your Pro to get out and enjoy a day together.

See you at Talbot,