

After the Constructor—What?

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IN these days when new golf courses are coming in to being in such steady and quick succession, it may not be amiss to consider for a moment the greenkeeper in relation to the strictly new course. There must be many who may have been in our greenkeeping profession for years and years without having been called upon to take over a brand new course and these many can probably be called fortunate, for the entirely new proposition confronts the greenkeeper with a thousand and one new problems, the handling of which will prove decidedly more of a tax than the mere maintenance of an already established course.

The greenkeeper going to take over a new course seems to me very much like the housewife contemplating moving into a newly built house. She sees the building contractor complete his job and take his departure, but does she expect forthwith to put rugs and furniture in place and sit down in bland comfort? Oh, no, the house must first be dried and aired and that must perforce take time. Then the countless details of making the house habitable and wholly comfortable have to be tackled—altogether quite a long time elapses between the completion of the builder's work and the day when the house is ready for occupancy.

And exactly so it is with the new golf course. The constructor's job entirely completed, there remains many an essential to be taken care of before the course is ready for play and still many more before the course is sturdily established and capable of being maintained on anything approaching an accurate budget.

The Training of Greensmen

The first problem facing the greenkeeper is the labor one. If he is fortunate enough to be in a neighborhood where other golf courses flourish, he may secure a number of experienced greensmen. His problem would in such a case, of course, be very greatly simplified, but even so he will, for a while at least, have to give considerable time to personal supervision, until he has all his greensmen working exactly according to his own particular methods. If circumstances compel the greenkeeper to employ local labor and he finds it wholly untrained, he must then carefully choose his men, and



A winter view of Number 15 green at Progress Country Club.

proceed carefully to train them. This will make an exacting demand on both his time and his patience—good greensmen are not made in a day—indeed, I sometimes think that good greensmen are born, not made.

Equipment, Repair Shop and Storage

Having lined up his gang, the greenkeeper turns his attention to equipment. The constructor has probably bequeathed him a scarred and well-worn tractor and possibly a fairway unit. Those will doubtless have to be overhauled and there will be putting-green mowers to select. The question of housing of equipment is one that very often receives sadly scant attention and the greenkeeper may find nothing more than an inadequate, weather-worn shack assigned him as an equipment shed. He would be well to insist at the outset on a sound, satisfactory building for this purpose, including a repair shop for machinery equipped with lathe, grinder, drills, etc. The equipment shed should be of such size as will allow for the winter job of repainting equipment, tee-boxes, markers, etc., and the greenkeeper must also have dry-room storage for seed and such commercial fertilizers as sulphate of ammonia. The ideal equipment storage building will, naturally, be furnace heated.

Road Construction

The golf course constructor is not naturally, perhaps, concerned greatly with ways and means of maintenance and it is unlikely that he has troubled to make roadways and tracks over which the tractors may be taken from one fairway to another. The making of these tracks will be one of the new greenkeeper's earliest tasks.

Starting Nursery and Compost Pile

On a new course there will be seldom, if ever, a sod nursery already prepared. The greenkeeper will have to choose a good location for this—somewhere well out of the line of play and then extend a water-line to the site. The compost pile, too, will seldom be already started, and the making of a new one will claim the greenkeeper's immediate attention.

Cleaning Up the Fairways and Rough

If the constructor has been pressed for time—and he always, always is—there will probably be tree-stumps here and there that have yet to be removed. After a season's frost, many stones will make their appearance on the fairways and throughout the season the weight of the tractor mowers passing over and over the ground will cause still more stones, or rocks, or boulders, to show up. This business of getting rid of stones, rocks, stumps, etc. will of a surety absorb a good deal of time for perhaps a couple of seasons.

And again the rough areas of the course may have received little or no attention at the hands of the constructor, and if those are to be cut by a rough-machine, then the greenkeeper no doubt will find quite a number of boulders and rocks there that must perforce be removed.

Laying Extra Drain Tile

One of the most important of the new problems for the greenkeeper will be drainage. While a certain amount of drainage work will undoubtedly have been done by the constructor, there will still be a great deal more drainage work to be done in the first year or so, and the greenkeeper, by reason of his constant observation and attention, ought to be the one to know best where drain lines ought to be laid. Spring and autumn seepages and summer rains will reveal to the greenkeeper where the water is to gather and only after a full round of the seasons will he be in a position to know exactly what he will be called upon to do in the way of drainage work.

Grading and Finishing Touches

Very frequently on his new course the greenkeeper will encounter steep grades at the backs of greens and the sides of tees. Such grades are, of course, hard to maintain and he will be called upon to remedy such defects by grading. Around traps, too, he will in all probability find that he really must put more of an "edge" than has been left by the constructor—this to prevent surface water from pouring into the traps. And so on, such extra jobs as those enumerated above will absorb the new greenkeeper's care, attention, and time throughout his first and possibly his second season—and only after they have been taken care of will he be able to settle down to more or less routine maintenance.

Perfecting the Putting Greens

While those manifold "extras" have been receiving his attention, the greenkeeper will be occupied with the all important task of bringing his putting-greens up to standard. It is comparatively easy for the constructor to get a good "catch" of grass, since he merely has to sow the seed and let the grass grow naturally, but it turns out that the period of the constructor's care is the only time when the grass will really be allowed to remain in its natural state. When the greenkeeper arrives on the scene he begins the constant cutting of the greens and then it is only by his assiduous care and judicious application of top-dressing, with persistent attention to the matter of weeding, that the greens will be brought to the stage of perfect putting surface and maintained as such.