

# Canadian Courses and Maintenance Problems

A first-hand glimpse of conditions north of the International boundary where the playing season is short and the winters severe. Bent grasses grow luxuriantly. Snow mold and its treatment

By C. A. TREGILLUS

Read before the annual convention of greenkeepers at Detroit, Friday, February 24.



C. A. Tregillus of Toronto, an authority on Canadian maintenance problems

**D**URING the past few years it has been the writer's privilege to keep in touch with Canadian conditions surrounding the Royal and Ancient Game. The Dominion follows the sport with great interest and a large proportion of the population actively play. There is still a great number who were golfers before coming to the country but who are unable to play now owing to lack of facilities; never-the-less they still retain a love for the game.

Golf has been played in Canada for a good many years; the records show that prominent clubs originated as far back as the late sixties and early seventies. One club has been playing upon the same ground continuously since about 1885. This constitutes the record for Canada, and curiously enough, the membership of this club is almost all American and the executive wholly so.

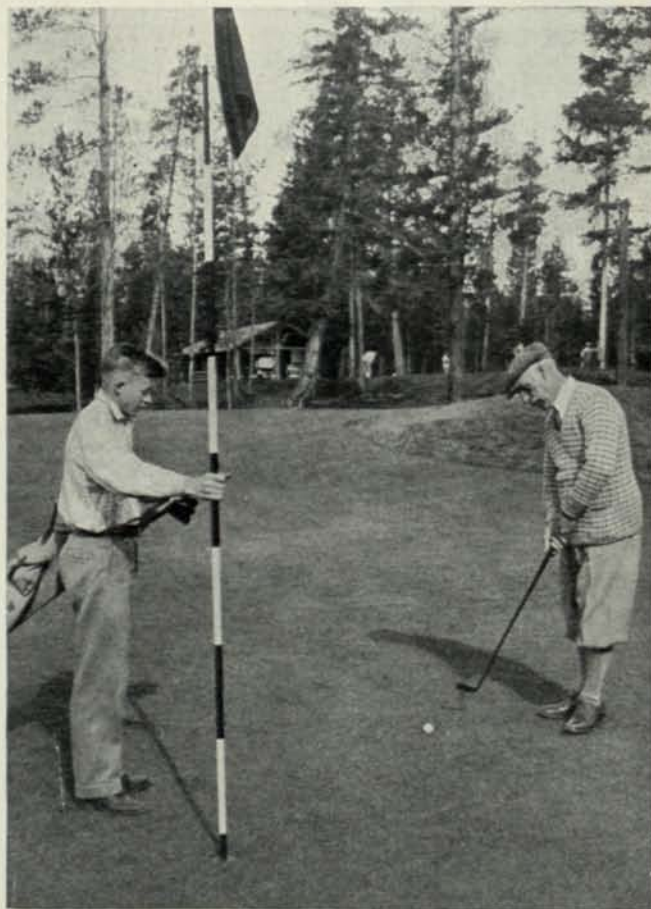
From these early beginnings there has been a steady growth which is still continuing at a healthy rate. Saturation point, so called, is still a long way off, though it is quite likely that the heavily capitalized private clubs will show a slower rate of increase than heretofore. It would appear that there are enough of these to supply the requirements for the present and near future, but there is a demand for courses to accommodate the golfer of more moderate means. Whether these will take the form of pay-as-you-play or cheaply run semi-private organizations it is hard to say, but the demand for such is there and will have to be met.

## Courses for Middle Class Golfers

**I**T IS a problem that will require considerable thought and working out, for the necessity of this kind of club arises around the large centers of population, in districts where the price of land is high because it lies within a radius of easy access. Adjacency is a factor that must not be overlooked because this class of golfer has usually little time for his recreation, or the means of motor car transportation. In many places this question has been solved by inexpensive construction on land held for real estate development; it is quite possible to

employ land that would otherwise lie idle and turn it to good purpose, where it will not only bring in a revenue for the owners, but is also instrumental in providing golf for large numbers of salary and wage earners who would otherwise be prohibited from the game.

On the whole, the golf courses in Canada do not comprise expensive layouts. There are, it is true, some of the finest courses that can be found anywhere and which have been built with quite a lot of money, but these are few and found only around the largest cities, and the sums spent upon them would doubtless not be considered large when compared with the cost of some of the courses in the United States. For the most part the course architecture and construction follows along conservative lines: efforts are directed towards blending the natural features into a layout rather than creating a course



On the Eighteenth Green, Jasper Park Lodge, Jasper, Alberta.

topography which is at variance with the surrounding terrain.

### Canadian Courses Have Natural Features

THE use of striking physical features, artificially produced, involving the removal of large quantities of earth, is little known in Canada and is not favored. True, some large operations are undertaken in the matter of clearing through timber and rock, and in the management of swamp and muskeg, but this work is for the purpose of providing a place to grow grass and not to create architectural adornment. It might be said that almost exclusively, the "natural" school of architecture is followed; that means that the original topography is disturbed as little as possible and where such is necessary, the actual work is disguised as much as lies within the art and skill of the designer and constructor to look as if the work was done by nature herself.

It is needless to say that working along these lines leaves a memorial pleasing to the eye of the golfers and gratifying for the greenkeeper. Freakish mounds and greens of extraordinary contour are hard to keep up and really give little satisfaction in proportion to their cost, and in Canadian opinion, they rarely conform with what might be called ideal golfing holes.

### Four Types of Canadian Courses

CANADIAN courses may be divided into three or four groups as regards their appointments and playing arrangements: (1) large private courses; (2) small private courses; (3) accommodation courses, and (4) straight commercial courses. The large courses are on a par with those south of the international line; they are in match condition at all times and their layouts call for the best the golfer can do to hold a low score. The small courses are found around nearly every town or group of towns, in fact, it might be safe to say, that every dweller in the older portion of English-speaking Canada is within easy access of a golf course. Some of these are primitive it is true, but never-the-less, are bona fide courses; their fees are cheap so that every one with a little leisure to follow the game can do so without it being a burden. These small courses are of interest in so far that they exhibit in many cases, how economically they can be run and what sort of golf can be provided on a very small expenditure.

Where funds do not run to water systems, of course the putting greens cannot be expected to be of very high standard, but in other respects they compare very well. One common criticism is that many are too short. This is due to two reasons: first, the attempt is too often made to put them on a scanty area of ground, and secondly, the original layout is invariably made by a local committee, whose members have not done this before and have a natural inclination to misjudge the distance of holes. Since most of them are nine-hole size, we often find that

the total grounds are not above forty five or fifty acres. By the time the clubhouse, driveway and parking ground, are taken out, there is not sufficient left for the needs of the course proper.

The experiences of these courses shows very clearly that when a club has to start in a modest way, on a small piece of land, it is unwise to attempt the expensive construction of the whole set of holes, but only to go ahead with those that will later blend in with a more elaborate layout. No sounder advice can be given a group of individuals considering the founding of a club in a small way, than to make sure of their layout, first, to see that it will grow with the club, and not have to be scrapped as the course is developed. It has most likely come within the observation of many greenkeepers and course superintendents who are called in for consultation, that the club that starts off without any proper plan of expansion is put to greater expense and inconvenience during the enlarging of the course, than the club that at slightly higher initial cost made provision for subsequent development.

### Tourist Golfers Help Course Improvement

ALL courses are in a perpetual state of change since every year an effort is made to do some improving, and this applies to every course in Canada whether great or small. In these days of extended motor travel, the tourist golfer, will carry along a bag of clubs in order to play when opportunity affords. The small town clubs are very hospitable in this direction for two reasons: first, they wish to make the visitor feel at home since, if he likes the place he may stay longer than at first intended, and secondly, a matter not to be forgotten, the green fees contributed to the club, are a very real asset.

The added revenue is, almost without exception, spent on the course, so it may be said that the touring and holidaying golfer is doing as much as any other factor towards the advancement of this class of golf course. If the present rate of improvement continues, it will not be many years before they will be on a par with the city courses; indeed many compare quite favorably as it is.

No resort or summer hotel is complete nowadays without a golf course; they are to be found in the most out-of-the-way places in the north country. These are solely for the enticement or accommodation of guests and run the whole gamut of attractiveness, from a mere apology, to the best ranking courses in the country. The amount of money spent on these is in proportion to the style of golf demanded by the clientele, and for that reason large hotels are spending extraordinary amounts of money to make courses that will equal those that the guests will find anywhere in their travels. The straight commercial courses as yet are not very general in Canada, though it is quite possible that the city of Winni-

peg with six, holds the records of any North American city of its size.

#### Remarks About Canadian Turf

SO much for brief comment on the courses in Canada. Now let us turn to a few remarks about the turf that is produced in that country and some interesting points in connection with its maintenance. The climate, with the exception of one severe drawback, which is common on this side of the line also, namely insufficient moisture, appears to be an ideal one for turf production. From the golfer point of view, it might, with the exception of the Pacific coast, have another drawback, that of too short a season. The latter is not without its advantage, as a long steady winter such as they have in the northern belt, is not hard on the grass and it shuts up the course so effectively that there is not the trouble from winter play as occurs in some warmer sections.

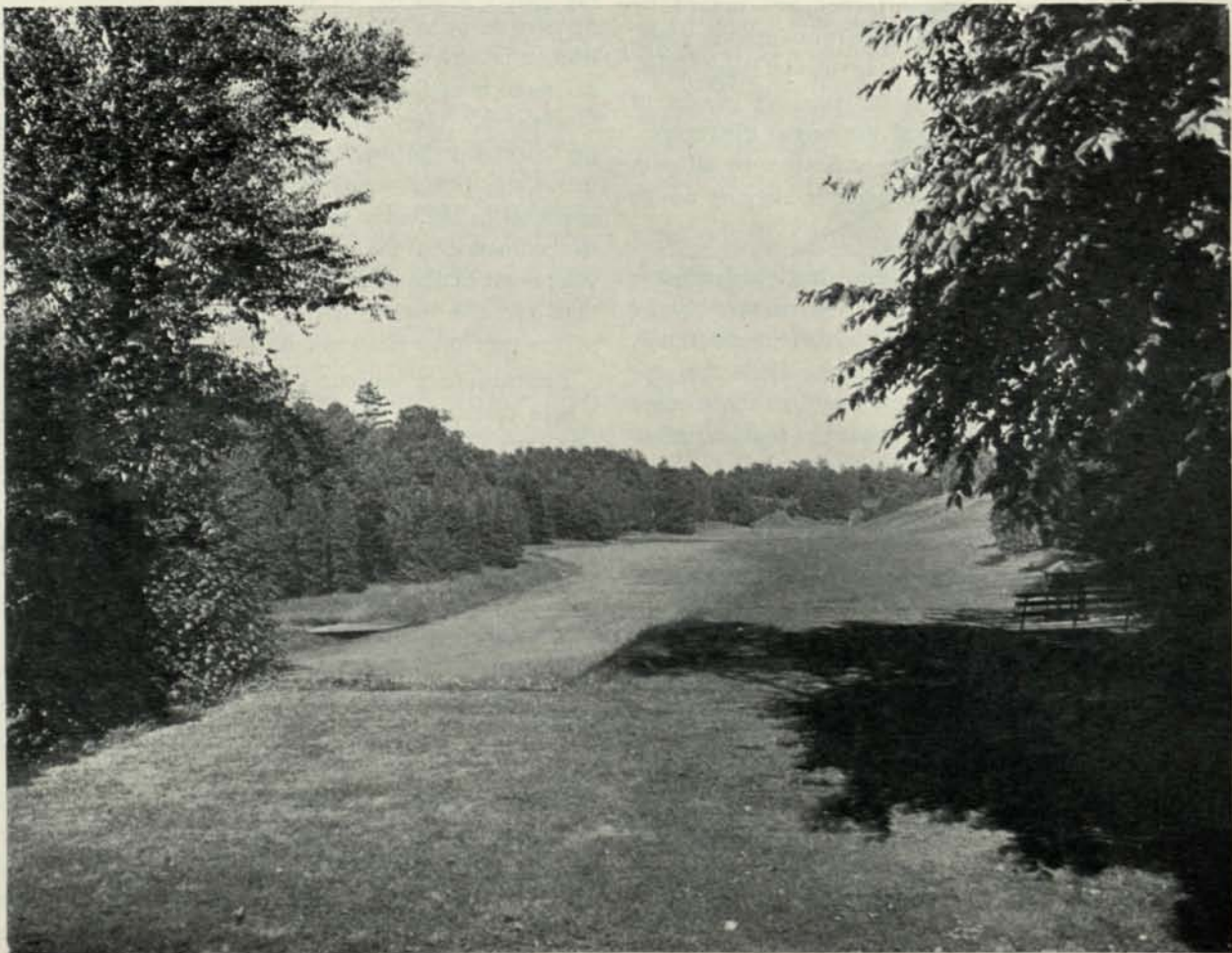
Turf grasses are naturally lovers of temperate and cool climate, and it is a fact not generally realized, that the farther north one travels, the wild grasses become finer in texture. Take for instance the Bent grasses. There is a definite southern limit to the zone in which these grasses make suitable summer turf. Along the lower limit we find that the creeping bent does toler-

ably well, some strains are able to stand the heat and disease better than others. In somewhat cooler parts as those moderated by ocean breezes, the Rhode Island Bent thrives. As one travels up the Atlantic coastal states it will be noticed how this grass gradually becomes the prevailing species on the roadside and in waste places. Farther North, Velvet bent makes its appearance as a wild grass and in and around the Gulf of St. Lawrence, we find Velvet and Rhode Island on an almost equal footing.

#### Velvet Bent Fairways in Nova Scotia

IN THE extreme easterly section of the province of Nova Scotia, the writer found a course with some fairways almost exclusively velvet bent. One portion of the course had two years previously been a vegetable garden, but when allowed to grow into rough, had reverted to a close mat of this desirable grass. Going still farther north we come across Northern Bent which is finer yet, but as far as is known, golf has not yet penetrated to the latitudes where this grass prevails.

Inland we find that turf grasses do well in nearly all regions. The one necessary and expensive thing is water; given that, the country can produce greens and fairways the equal of any on the continent. Creeping bent is to be found growing in a wild state on almost



*The seventh hole, Toronto Golf Club, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.*

every golf course, and many of these varieties when developed, have done splendidly. Strains of creeping bent isolated at Arlington, are doing well as far north as there are recognized courses. And not alone in bents are there good putting greens, but some of the finest greens that the writer has seen in Canada, were composed chiefly of fescue grass. Though it appears that this grass is not so successful south of the line, still there are in the Dominion some places where it has done extraordinarily well. It is acknowledged by greenkeepers who have fescue and fescue-redtop greens that they are more trouble to maintain than creeping bent, but they consider them worth the extra effort, if they are the kind of greens that members prefer, and there are golfers that do like putting on a green with a "feel" to it.

#### Winter Kill Not a Menace in Canada

**M**ANY people think that the extreme cold, to which they suspect Canada is subjected, makes it difficult to winter the greens in good condition. In the first place the settled portions of Canada do not suffer from a very severe climate, and secondly, cold weather does not hurt northern golf grasses. The injuries which result in winter kill in its many forms, are caused by several agencies, but rarely, if at all, from extreme frost. Variable winter weather is more to blame than below zero temperature, also methods in handling greens in the fall, and in the construction of the greens themselves. These are factors that are pretty well known by all who have to do with the upkeep of courses in regions where winters are cold.

No recognized procedure has been developed regarding the protection of greens during the winter. Some go to the expense of covering with various materials, while others do not. There are some locations that appear to be benefited by such practice and in those cases it repays the cost. The coverings that are most effective are those that do not lie too close to the ground and permit a circulation of air over the turf, rather than the material that lies flat and heavy on the grass.

Boughs and branches serve the purpose well because they hold the snow from blowing away or melting under the influence of mid-winter warm spells. These have been valuable in positions where the sun might beat down with considerable force, as on greens in corners with a southern aspect and protected from cold winds. Normally such locations would fill with snow to a depth sufficient to afford all the protection required, but there are times and districts where the snow is not enough for this. Protection has also been secured by covering greens exposed to high winds and would naturally be blown clean. The drying effect of winter winds and the sun's rays is very considerable as no doubt those with hill-top and severely elevated greens have found.

#### Covering Greens Not General Practice

**C**OVERING greens however, is not a general practice; they come through very well in their natural condition, providing they are properly built and properly cared for. With adequate surface drainage and a fairly healthy mat of grass, there is not much fear of worse effect than if they were not given this protection. The placing of brush over the green tends to encourage the grass to grow a little sooner in the spring than it would ordinarily, but in the opinion of some this brings an additional hazard in exposing the green succulent growth to late frosts.

The accumulation of snow in deep banks at times offers trouble as these drifts are slow in disappearing. In such cases it is found advantageous to remove the snow by hand. It also happens that occasionally, water lies on greens because it is penned back by frozen snow or faulty contour. The likelihood of trouble resulting is relieved by making trenches to allow the water to run away, and breaking up ice sheets so that the air can circulate and prevent the temperature of the ground from becoming too high.

#### Snow Mold and How to Treat It

**S**NOW mold occurs in many sections and on courses where it makes its appearance it causes much disfigurement of the grass if allowed to run unchecked. The disease is noticed by the appearance of cobwebby patches scattered over the grass in the early spring, as the snow disappears. The combination of cool, near freezing temperature and the moisture from the melting snow seem to be the factors conducive to its growth. The webs are seen in the early morning only as they collapse under influence of the rising temperature. The later development of the disease, where the affected grass all but dies out, is a source of much annoyance as the marring of the turf may last until well on towards mid-summer.

Precautionary measures involve the removal of snow where practicable so that the green can dry out quickly, and sweeping the greens of the webs early in the morning before the sun has dried them up. Excellent control has been afforded by treating greens, that are likely to be infected, with fungicides, late in the fall so that the chemical will be present on the turf when the disease awakens in the spring. Any of the recognized Brown Patch remedies will do. This method appears to be logical since it is very possible for the mold to grow even under a snow bank. Spraying or dusting as soon as the disease is active is also effective, but may mean repetition if the snow is still around.

Summer fungus diseases are not very general. Some greens do suffer from the heat when the days become warm and humid and there is the odd touch of brown spotting, but for the most part the Dominion is pretty free from serious trouble of this sort. Prompt treatment of affected greens will usually bring them around in a week or ten days.