

# Doc's Dugout - An Inning from our Past & Present

by Dr. Kent Kurtz - STMA Historian

## TURF ESTABLISHMENT & CULTURE IN THE EARLY 1900'S

A sports turf manager in the early years of the 20th century faced a lot of issues that he couldn't explain or, in many instances, he didn't know how to manage on his turf with the limited information that was available. Also remember, in those days there were no official turfgrass publications from which to glean information, or, for that matter, no farm advisors or research centers to gain new knowledge. This newsletter contains excerpts from the diary of an early turf manager who probably worked for a school with a fairly large acreage used for playgrounds and athletic fields.

*Note: In the last issue, the diary stated that they seeded the turf on April 10, 1916.*  
**September 7, 1917**

*Our grass is now considered to be the finest in our area. Due to the drought and heavy summer play the grass has deteriorated somewhat. Because of this we have negotiated to rent a fine, 10-foot wide, horse-drawn seeding machine. The reason for renting and not purchasing it at this time will save us money since our seeding operations occur only once a year in the fall. Also since we plan to seed quite heavily (about 12*

*bushels per acre) the cost of seeding will use up all of our reserve money. With the seed sowing machine we can do 10-12 acres a day, which is considerably faster than seeding by hand.*  
**November 30, 1920**

*I shall note in my grass records that today the United States Golf Association adopted a resolution to form a Green Section for the purpose of collecting and distributing information of value respecting the proper upkeep of turf, including that of golf courses. This is a great step forward, since we have so many problems with disease, insects and lack of general knowledge most important to growing good turf. I am looking forward to receiving the first bulletin of the Green Section.*

**February 2, 1921**

*It is well worth noting that the second bulletin volume of the Green Section was devoted entirely to grass culture. This is truly a step in the right direction. I shall make a note of the following recommendations:*

*Item I. Buy grass seeds by the pound and not by the bushel. The number of pounds in a bushel is not definite and continued on page 9*

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## Doc's Dugout

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the purchaser has no means of knowing just how much he will get.

Item 2. It is well to establish a proper level of cutting grass as early as possible in the spring, as it is quite difficult to lower the level when it is once established. Especially is this true during the hot months of summer. Under such conditions, if the grass is crowned, it recovers very slowly.

Item 3. Earthworms begin to be active with the first warm days in spring just as soon as the earliest grasses take on a live green color. The number of worm casts is a good index to their abundance. If they are numerous the grass should be wormed just as soon as the soil is fairly dry so the poison will go down into their holes.

### February 10, 1921

The U.S.G.A. Green Section has appointed two scientist, Dr. C.V. Piper and Dr. R.A. Oakley, to conduct experiments and disseminate the results of their findings.

### March 21, 1921

Street sweepings as a source of manure for topdressing and general planting should be avoided. We killed a consider-

able amount of grass using this material. After consultation with authorities the following conclusions were drawn:

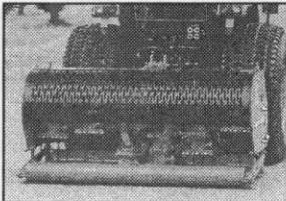
Street sweepings were for many years an excellent source of manure. With the advent of asphalt-paved streets and the increase of horseless carriages it appears that oil from the asphalt and the automobile is absorbed in the street sweepings. When mixed into compost the oil remains and if applied to the grass, will most likely kill it. Beware and avoid street sweepings.

Many of the early mysteries that confronted turfgrass managers were alleviated in the past 80 years with the establishment of state experiment stations, the U.S.G.A. Green Section, the Cooperative Extension Service, annual turfgrass conferences and trade shows, numerous publications to aid in the establishment and care of turfgrasses and, in 1981, by the formation of the STMA. Each of these have contributed to better and safer sports turf areas and continue to provide the athlete with the best possible surface available.

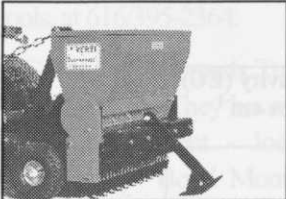
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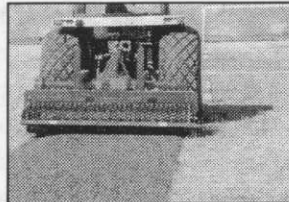
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