



Coarse grasses like this barnyard grass defy mowing, says Norm Robie, right, in session with Steve Derrick, Diamond Shamrock.

## Challenge for Golf Supe

# BATON TWIRLERS AND GOLFERS

By DONALD McGUINESS

**I**T ISN'T every grounds superintendent who goes about his work surrounded by as many as 300 beautiful girls. But that's the burden which Norm Robie carries at the Smith-Walbridge Camp near Syracuse, Indiana. He is maintenance director and grounds superintendent for the camp. It includes a school for baton twirlers as well as a golf course.

All summer, groups of 300 or so girls arrive at Smith-Walbridge for a week of concentrated instruction and practice in the camp's specialties of baton twirling, "drum majoring" and related activities. During the last three weeks in August, school band marching participants come to the camp for music instruction and marching practice.

Keeping the turf in shape on the practice drill fields at the camp is a tough job in anyone's book, and Robie is constantly striving to keep it looking good and easy to march on. "Those girls will wear this grass down to the bare dirt at the turn points," Robie exclaims. "And we've been eaten up with crabgrass that won't cut neatly. Right after we've mowed it simply pops up, looks unsightly and is difficult to march on."

In 1969, the turf at Smith-Walbridge Camp had become about 60% crab-

grass and other annual grasses, and these unsightly pests were rapidly crowding out the bluegrass and fescue which Robie was reseeding regularly. Something more drastic had to be done.

Robie had heard about a pre-emergence herbicide, Dacthal, that really controls crabgrass while being extremely gentle on desirable perennial grasses. In the spring of 1970 he applied Dacthal W-75 wettable powder at 12 lbs. per acre. "We used our new sprayer setup," he says,

"and it worked like a charm." The "setup" is a Broyhill sprayer with a 100-gallon tank, fitted onto a Cushman cart, with an 18-foot boom. "With this rig, we can cover an acre before we have to refill," he says.

Robie is "plenty satisfied" with the results he saw as early as June, 1970. "I'd say we got 95% to 98% control of the crabgrass," he exclaims. "What's left looks more like a perennial rye grass or rough fescue." The Dacthal, because it affects the seedling sprout only, hasn't bothered the desirable perennial bluegrass and fescue at all.

The golf course is another part of Robie's job. He is superintendent of the 18-hole Maxwellton Golf Course, which lies just across the road from the camp. Smith-Walbridge recently bought the golf course, and as a result have incorporated a golf instruction program into the camping activities.

"When I took over nine years ago, that golf course was nothing more than a cow pasture," Robie says. "I put it in shape, and we're planning on installing sprinkler irrigation soon." As a result, he wants to start eliminating *Poa annua* and allow perennial bluegrass to cover the course.

Diamond representative Steve Derrick has worked out a plan with Robie that will allow the *Poa* to be brown out, and Dacthal to stop the new seedlings from growing and replacing the burnt-out grass. "We should apply 18 to 20 pounds of Dacthal before the middle of August," Derrick says, "and then follow up with 14 lbs. per acre in the spring."

"It might be a brown course in many places this fall," Robie admits, "but if it will mean eliminating the *Poa* without hurting the bluegrass, it might be just what I'm looking for."

Baton twirlers are tough on drill field turf. Challenge is to maintain quality.

