

Even In  
Las Vegas . . .

## You Can't Gamble With Turf



Golf superintendent, Jim Connally, checks the condition of the turf at the Desert Inn Country Club. During July and August he pumps a million gallons of water onto the course every 24 hours.

**JIM CONNALLY** is the golf superintendent at the famous Desert Inn Country Club in Las Vegas, Nevada. He has been there for 3 years, and in his tenure, he has learned to respect the odds against keeping an 18-hole golf course playable the year around. His odds are formidable.

To begin with, the climate is against him. He has measured ground temperatures up to 126 de-

grees F. in July and August. During these months, he isn't surprised to find the thermometer bouncing around the 100 degree mark at 6 a.m. During the milder winter period at Las Vegas—January and February—he may encounter a temperature of 20 degrees at dawn, and on the same day see it shoot up into the high seventies.

To complicate the picture, there  
*(continued on page 34)*

Weed control is a big problem during the year for Jim Connally. Heavy player traffic on the course and a dry climate is an open invitation to crabgrass and goosegrass. This superintendent uses Dacthal, a broad-spectrum herbicide to control these problems.



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**LAS VEGAS** (from page 18)

isn't much rainfall in southern Nevada. An inch or two a year is about normal, and that usually comes all at once. It is a longer shot than getting the jackpot in the casinos. "It is a great germinating ground for crabgrass, goosegrass, and any other kind of weeds that like dry weather and heavy traffic on the course," observes Connally. It all adds up to a challenge for golfers, grass and the superintendent.

But the odds against Jim Connally do not end here. Desert Inn is host to a variety of tournaments. Biggest of them all, as a superintendent sees it, are the nationally known Gold Cup Tournaments. Groups from golf clubs all over the country come to match their swings against each other. These tournaments run every week from September to June. There is a big final playoff at the end of June. The prize for the winning club is a \$50,000 gold cup which travels from club to club. Individual winners get a smaller gold cup—worth about \$1,400 — which they can keep. During this nine month period the traffic on the course often exceeds 250 a day.

Between Gold Cup competitions, the Desert Inn course plays host to major professional competition. The Tournament of Champions has been played there. In 1971 the Sealy LPGA was televised from Desert Inn. Every golf superintendent who has ever hosted a major tournament knows what that involves.

Just one more complication at Desert Inn is the fact that the Inn and the golf course were one of the early purchases of Hughes Tool Company in Las Vegas. Some of the hotels and casinos added later to the Howard Hughes investments in Las Vegas have no golf courses. So the guests come to Desert Inn. It means more traffic for the course.

How does Jim Connally handle these multiple problems? He has become an expert in beating the odds against weather, weeds and people.

For example, let's start with irrigation. In the high desert country of Las Vegas, he pumps more than a million gallons of water onto the course every 24 hours during the hot months of July and August. He applies up to 200,000 gallons a day during the rest of the year. The water comes from three 1,100-foot wells on the course. It is pumped into the small lakes and ponds which provide the course's water hazards. From there, it is pumped to the fairways and greens, mostly at night, by an automatic electric-

powered underground system.

The best grass Connally has found to beat Nevada's weather extremes on the fairways is common Bermuda. He over-seeds each fall with a ryegrass variety. His greens are sowed with Penncross Bent.

Weed control is a major problem. The dry climate and the heavy player traffic on the course provide ideal germinating and growing conditions for a variety of noxious weeds. Crabgrass and goosegrass are the worst. Years ago, Connally started using Dacthal, a broad-spectrum herbicide. It has worked for him.

He spreads Dacthal G-5, a five percent granular formulation, twice a year — in January and in March — at rates varying from 160 to 180 pounds per acre. Using a Larson broadcaster with a 30 foot throw, he travels about 8 mph and manages to keep about one hole ahead of a four-some. He likes the granular form because it stays close to the surface where the weeds germinate in the high desert soil. In addition, the granular product doesn't leach, even during periods of heavy irrigation.

However, Connally is not the kind of a customer that a careless salesman can count on. There is a corner of the Desert Inn course where he maintains a special test plot. Here, he measures the effectiveness of turf varieties, herbicides, fungicides and fertilizer. The results dictate his future programs.

Connally is just as thorough in every other facet of his grounds maintenance program. He soil tests every three months, even though he has a pretty good idea of what his desert soil will require. It generally calls for a fertilizer high in nitrogen and potash—in the spring to make the turf grow, in the fall to keep the color. He counts on nitrogen (urea and calcium nitrate) to keep the fairways green during winter periods.

The one thing that Connally doesn't need is phosphorus—there is more than enough in the water he draws from his deep wells.

The arid environment around Las Vegas is not generally conducive to turf diseases. But on those rare occasions when the humidity is high, he applies Daconil 2787, a broad spectrum fungicide that has activity against many major turf diseases.

Connally doesn't have much time for tillage. The year-round playing season and the daily crowds on the course make it next to impossible. However, he does aerate the fairways and remove thatch. Addition-



ally, he schedules 4-5 aerations of the greens each year.

Desert Inn presents still another problem which doesn't exactly involve the playing areas. It is trees. Southern Nevada is not a big forest area, but the Club boasts some of the oldest trees in the state. The olive trees are estimated to be up to 100 years old. There are also elms, cottonwoods, Arizona cypress and ash, and weeping willows. Connally maintains them with the same thoroughness that he attends to the greens and fairways. They are hydrospaded with liquid fertilizer each spring and fall. Once a year, professional tree surgeons come to prune and trim the trees. They add to the beauty—and hazards—of the course.

Connally's 20-man maintenance crew work round the clock. Mowing is done at dawn. Aerifying, watering, topdressing are accomplished while the guests are asleep, or at the gaming tables. After all, Las Vegas is a 24-hour town. Only the golfers wait until daylight. So the work on the course has to be done when course traffic is light.

Despite his year-around battle with the climate and the crowds, Jim Connally maintains a keen sense of humor about the things that go on around him.

One of his favorite stories involves a player who walked into the maintenance yard and asked for a ladder. "Why a ladder?" asked Connally.

"I blew a shot on the 17th fairway, right under that big cottonwood tree" said the golfer. "I got so mad I threw the club up in the air. It stuck in a branch. I threw one, and then another club up to get the first one back, and they stuck. I'd leave the clubs and give up this game . . . except that clubs are rented. I have to get them back to the pro shop."

Connally found a ladder.

One time, owner Howard Hughes stopped by the Desert Inn just before a major tournament. Several television relay towers had been erected. "What are those?" demanded Mr. Hughes. Their purpose was explained. "Take them down. They spoil the beauty of the course," was the order. It took fast teamwork to remove the towers and lay ground cables overnight to get the game on the air.

It is all in a day's work for Jim Connally. And while others gamble fortunes, he invests in sound maintenance programs that pay off handsomely in quality turf at Desert Inn. For Connally has found that even in Las Vegas, you can't gamble with turf.

## Protective Clothing

### Safety Conference Topic

One hundred and thirty authorities from government, industry, and science recently met on progress and problems related to providing adequate protective clothing and equipment for workers using pesticides.

The conference, sponsored by the Federal Working Group on Pest Management, was held at the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta. Its purpose as stated by Dr. Fred H. Tschirley, chairman of the Working Group, was to assess the current success of clothing and equipment in providing protection; technological progress to date; government regulations affecting clothing and equipment; and the acceptance and use of protective devices by pesticide applicators.

Among the goals of the conference were the identification of deficiencies in the practical use of protective equipment and the development of guidelines for the more effective use of protective clothing.

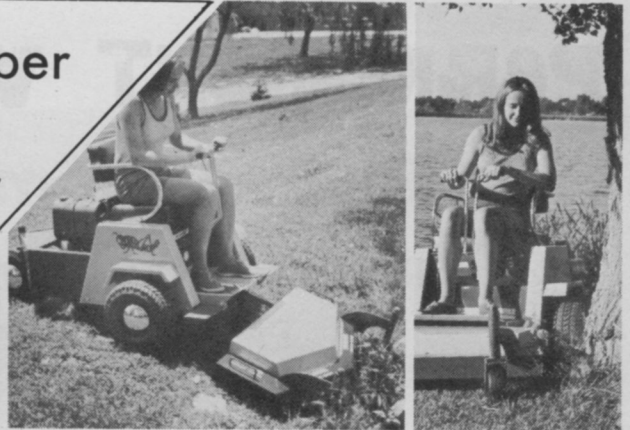
Many authorities presented papers at the conference. Dr. John Davies, Department of Medicine, University

of Miami, Florida, said, "It is a must that we study men in the lab as well as the food they eat as we increase our knowledge of pesticides in relation to the environment."

Dr. Howard Maibach, department of dermatology, University of California Medical School, presented results of recent research. The amount of absorption of pesticides through the human skin, he found, varies with the location on the body. The forehead absorbs seven times as much pesticide as the forearm and the scalp four times as much as the forearm and palm. Washing, he noted, is most effective within one minute of exposure but only somewhat effective within a half hour of exposure, indicating the urgent need for immediate attention following skin exposure to pesticides.

Robert Merkle, a product line manager with an equipment manufacturing company, listed the three avenues of entry of pesticides as mouth, nose and skin. He cautioned that respirators should fit individuals perfectly to be effective, that tight facial seal was essential, and that respirators should be protected from contamination inside the mask at all times.

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