



## Skill, Hard Work Revive Dying Course

DESERTED FOR two years and looking like anything but a golf course, Rogala Public Links challenged anyone to put it back into playing condition.

Answering the challenge was Charlie Meaker.

"I had heard about the course a year ago, but I had not looked at it until December, 1973," Meaker said.

"At that time the fairways were a 2 1/2 foot mixture of bluegrass, brome and weeds. The greens were Penncross and averaging about 1 1/2 feet in height," he said.

But in spite of the course's rough appearance, Meaker was able to see potential under the matted grass and crust of snow, and decided to buy Rogala.

The papers were signed in March, 1974, and Rogala had an owner. Meaker moved into the deteriorated clubhouse of this Mattoon, Ill., course and began the arduous task of readying the equipment and facilities for business.

On weekends, wife Donna and children Nancy, 10, Karen, 7, and Joe, 2, made the pilgrimage down from Bloomington, Ill., to add helping hands to the project. While Donna and the girls turned their attention to the clubhouse, Meaker concentrated on the equipment.

The equipment included a 340 International, one Toro walking greens mower, a Walter Spiker, a Red Rider Truckster, a Smith Co. sprayer, a top dresser, a '65 Chevy pickup, a 1948 cub tractor, a seven gang and a five gang. The cub, pickup and 340 were frozen up and the radiators were busted. All mowers were in need of sharpening,

*(continued on page 40)*

Rogala Public Links — as Charlie Meaker found it in March, 1974.



The greens on Meaker's Rogala Public Links were ready for play in about two months, following an extensive mowing and fertilization program.

**SKILL** (from page 32)

and none of the equipment had been started or moved in two years. But by April, Meaker had it out on the course.

"The first thing I worked on was the greens," Meaker said. "I used a 30-inch Mott walking flail mower to take the greens from 18 inches down to an inch."

With a borrowed blower, Meaker blew the clippings off and

mowed the greens again. The following week, a 30-inch reel mower trimmed the greens down to 1/2 inch.

"I started to burn the greens off, but a putting green on fire just didn't look right to me, so I put it out as quickly as I could," he said. "It was a good thing, too, because by July some of the burnt areas had not caught up with the rest of the green."

In mid April, greens height was dropped to 5/16 inch, and Meaker began applying 10-20-30 water-soluble fertilizer using 1 3/4 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. Two weeks later, he applied Verti-green 16-4-8 fertilizer, using 1 1/2 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. "I would have fertilized sooner," Meaker said, "but the soil temperature was too low."

While the greens feasted on their long overdue feeding, Meaker took a brush hog mower to battle with the rest of the course. He mowed the fairways from 2 1/2 feet down to two inches, and borrowed a sweeper to remove clippings and give the grass a chance to grow.

"I used my seven gang to maintain a 2-inch cut for the next three mowings, then I dropped it down to 1 3/4 inches," Meaker said.

Miraculously, the course was ready for the grand opening on May 4, 1974, but Mother Nature decided to test the Meaker family a little further. More rain, added to what was already one of the wettest springs on record, put a damper on opening day. Rain continued to limit play throughout the spring, but by the middle of June as many as 70 golfers a day were testing the new Rogala Links.

With the course in play, Meaker's problems were by no means over. The nine holes added up to 35,000 square feet of greens, 28 acres of fairways, and 60 acres of rough. Even with good equipment and an ample budget for materials and labor, this would present a small problem to any superintendent. But Meaker had been blessed with neither, so most of the work had to be done by him and his family as economically as possible.

Meaker has a bit of advice for others who are contemplating similar ventures: "Before you can start this kind of a project, you must set up a budget and stick to it. Don't go overboard; pay as you go, or make sure you don't overspend. Also, you can plan on working 20 hours a day."

Most any superintendent can keep a course in top condition, given enough labor and resources. But when resources are limited and you're starting from scratch, it takes a highly skilled superintendent to bring a course through. Charlie Meaker has shown that skill, knowledge and hard work are still a superintendent's best tools.

## 3 BILLY GOAT Indoor/Outdoor Vacuums



**BILLY GOAT**  
INDUSTRIES, INC.

P.O. BOX 229  
GRANDVIEW, MISSOURI 64030

One man with a Billy Goat becomes a big clean-up crew. BG 60 is available in self-propelled and push models, with gasoline or propane engine, or batteries. For all models—optional intake hose for hard to reach areas.

Model	HP	Snout width	Blower housing	Application
BG 60	8	30"	Steel	Industrial
BT 70	8	30"	Steel	Grounds, park
KD50	5	26"	Steel	Lawns, drives
KD35	3 1/2	26"	Steel	Lawns, drives

For More Details Circle (118) on Reply Card