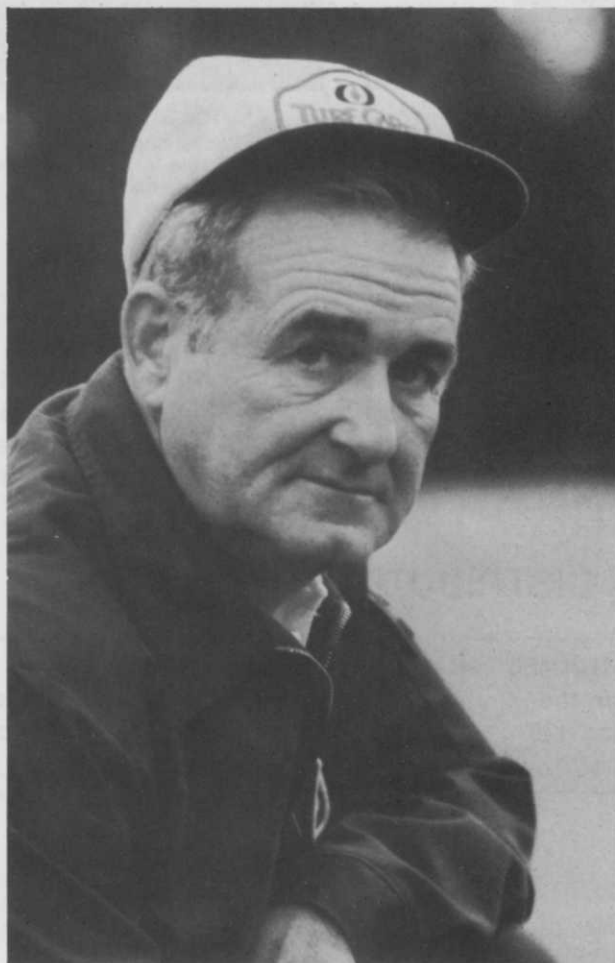


BEATING MOLE CRICKET

*... One man's
success story*



One of the first problems encountered by Les Getchell when he took over as superintendent of the golf courses on Jekyll Island, Ga., was getting rid of a severe mole-cricket infestation.

Damage was extensive on the fairways of the three courses operated by the Jekyll Island Authority.

Getchell, a golfer and former Navy man who specialized in computer maintenance, felt qualified to take on the challenge. He was among the first to graduate from a special program at Lake City, Florida, Community College. It is the only school in the South that offers an Associate Science Degree in Golf Course Operations.

"The mole-cricket infestation was not only unsightly," Getchell says, "but it affected the business here. There was no question about repairing the damage on the greens immediately, because I think the majority of players feel that if you've got good greens any damage on the fairways can more or less be overlooked.

"But," Getchell adds, "I also felt some control measures had to be taken on the fairways to bring the insect population down to a tolerable level."

Getchell relates that his first step was to set up some experiments to determine what chemicals would do the best job. He worked closely with Dr. Bob Barry, who was then the head of the University of Georgia

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mole crickets

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experiment station at Tifton. Getchell and Barry used a driving range marked off in grids; each grid would have a flag to identify the particular chemical being used.

The experiments showed that the most effective and economical job was done by Diazinon AG500. Getchell then applied the material in spring soon after the mole crickets hatched.

"We used it at four ounces to a thousand square feet, and we had a tremendous kill — just fabulous."

Now he gets the best results when he treats within a week after seeing the first mole crickets in spring, he says. If he waits until the adult stage, they are a problem to control.

"Oh, I've had some fantastic kills of the adults by using baits on the fairways," Getchell explains. "We'd presoak the ground on warm nights and put out the baits. But I'm not really sure what the original population was in those areas. Did we control those in the ground or not?"

Another drawback, he says, is the high cost — about 40-45 cents per pound. Recommended rates are 80-100 pounds per acre. In addition, weather is a factor. If it rains hard overnight, the bait disintegrates.

"I'm convinced that I've got them down to tolerable limits on the fairways where I have used Diazinon on immature mole crickets," Getchell says. "Business is back up, too."

The Navy veteran says his approach to golf course maintenance problems is cautious. That's his style, and he's aware that he lacks practical experience in the field.

"I do a lot of phone calling," he says. "I talk to a lot of people, and I don't hesitate to ask for advice."

The result has been an overhaul of the irrigation systems at the Jekyll Island courses. He has initiated use of herbicides and better results with insecticides. Application equipment has been calibrated accurately. Administration of maintenance has been improved. □



Experiments by Les Getchell convinced him mole cricket damage could be reduced to tolerable levels by spraying insecticide instead of using baits.