

“Fish tore up the grass on your golf course?” I asked, trying to envision how that could be. For some absurd reason I kept seeing walking catfish pulling themselves out of the nearby river, chomping off mouthfuls of turf and then slithering back into the brown water! No that’s, well...a little too crazy.

But the small, grey-haired man insisted.

“You bet they did,” he fairly shouted. “The fish were everywhere, everywhere. These weren’t little fish. These were big fish.” The man, the owner

and superintendent of this golf course, arose from the snack counter stool and spread his hands about 18 inches apart to show the size of the fish.

“No, no, many of them were bigger, much bigger,” scolded his wife, stepping in front of him and holding her short, plump arms another foot wider anyway. “They were carp. Carp can get much, much bigger. There were so many we couldn’t do anything.”

The thought of fish, even “big, big fish” destroying turfgrass on a golf course didn’t register, and the look on my face must have said so, because both of them kept up a running commentary of just how their 9-hole course had, temporarily at least, become a 7-hole golf course.

Who would have thought it? Not me, not until I stopped late that afternoon for a quick 9 holes while on a husbandly errand in an unfamiliar part of the county. Hey, why not? There were just a handful of golfers on the course, and at least another hour or so of daylight.

When I handed the owner a ten he immediately apologized that I couldn’t play the 4 and 5 holes. I could play numbers 8 and 9 twice to make my 9 holes, he explained before handing me back 3 bucks in change. That was good

This fish story meant trouble for golf turfgrass



Ron Hall

RON HALL
Managing Editor

GOLF

PAGE 46 ▶

This putting green is a laboratory

PAGE 86 ▶

Where every drop of water counts

PAGE 126 ▶

How to make dry spots vanish

PAGE 186 ▶

Is equipment leasing for you?

enough for me. Even so, I wasn’t going to tee off until I heard the rest of this fish story.

The man and wife took turns explaining how a storm in mid May caused the nearby river to “back up” and overflow its banks onto the course. The storm also apparently damaged some nearby cribs in the river. The pens held thousands of carp. The suddenly-free carp spread out over the shallow water of the fourth and fifth holes on the course. It was spawning season. Whoopee! They wiggled and thrashed in the shallow water until they’d destroyed almost all the grass on the two golf holes, the two that paralleled the river.

When the water receded after eight or nine days, it left behind thousands of stranded, dying carp. The owner said he couldn’t reseed the two holes until he and his wife gathered the dead fish up and hauled them to a landfill. They did a lot of the work themselves. It was a nasty business.

The man said he’d owned the golf course for years and it had flooded before. But this was the first time it had ever suffered such severe fish damage. **LM**