

## The Soggy Putting Green

By Alex Pirie

Old Elm Club, Fort Sheridan, Ill.

The watering of putting greens is a problem which demands the most careful consideration. The questions involved are many and varied. Of major importance in studying the problem for a particular putting green are the following considerations: What kind of a golf shot does the green call for? What is the condition of its surface? Is it hard or just dry? Is it soft, soggy, or firmly wet? At what height is the grass cut? What, if any, outstanding features of design does it possess which are likely to affect the action of the ball after it has landed on the surface?

These questions enter prominently into the problem of watering a putting green and should be given careful thought if a condition is to be obtained that is fair to the players and favorable to the turf. Personally, I believe that under no circumstances a soft, soggy, or spongy putting green is advisable from either the player's or the greenkeeper's viewpoint. Such a green does not develop finesse, skill, courage, or strategy on the part of the player, but is merely something into which the ball can be played, almost heedlessly.



None but a pitch shot could be played to this small putting green on a 332-yard hole. With proper soil and structural conditions the turf on this type of green can be maintained so as to hold a pitch shot without excessive watering

Let us assume, for the purpose of this discussion, that the shot to be played calls for a high-pitched ball with backspin from a maximum distance of 140 yards to a small putting green surrounded by hazards. Is it sound golf or good greenkeeping to keep such a green in a more or less waterlogged condition onto which the player can "shovel" his ball with little regard for the finer points of the game, a condition which, moreover, is almost invariably a constant source of worry to the greenkeeper? In my opinion it is not, because, in the first place, it is uncomplimentary to the player. It also is the cause of much annoyance to a player to find his ball in one of the

innumerable indentations caused by the green's being too soft and it is frequently impossible to hole a putt no matter how short the distance when a series of indentations occur between the ball and the hole.

Considering the effect of over-watering purely from the green-keeper's viewpoint, I believe that many of the turf diseases and other difficulties encountered in producing satisfactory putting turf are to be attributed directly or indirectly to this practice. It is highly conducive to an almost constant "stewing" process during the hot days of summer, which is harmful in that it checks the development of a deep root system and leaves little or no vitality in the grass plants for resistance to disease.

What, then, is the remedy for an unhealthy, waterlogged putting green? The player is certainly entitled to expect that if he plays his shot with a fair degree of skill he will receive an equally fair response from the green when his ball lands and that his ball will stay within a reasonable distance from where it hit provided his judgment and execution were sound. On the basis of my thirty years of observation and practice may I suggest that when a putting green does not properly hold well-played shots some attention be directed to improving drainage, soil texture, and other essentials. If these improvements fail to give complete satisfaction I would suggest, for the particular type of green under discussion, that instead of using excessive water to provide "bite" for the ball the grass be cut from  $\frac{1}{8}$  to  $\frac{3}{16}$  of an inch higher than the average height of turf on other greens requiring entirely different shots in approaching them. These putting greens should be watered only when it is necessary to keep the grass in a healthy condition.

There is no good reason why the turf on each putting green should be cut to the same close, uniform height. Such a practice does little to develop the finer points of judgment in play. Allowing the grass to grow a little longer on a green will not detract from fine putting and will provide plenty of "bite" for a well-played shot. It will also, to a great extent, tend to reduce the unfair indentations left by balls, to which I have previously called attention.

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**Not all insects are to be condemned.**—When kept under proper control many insects are of decided help from an agricultural viewpoint. Australia is actually importing plant bugs, caterpillars, scale insects, and beetles to feed on the prickly pear cactus, which has spread so rapidly there as to become a costly weed. In spite of various control methods practiced in Australia, this cactus has increased its range of devastation at the rate of 1,000,000 acres a year. According to recent reports, however, the use of insects as a control measure has been of sufficient success to predict complete control of the prickly pear cactus within 10 years. In Hawaii, also, a number of different kinds of insects have been introduced from Mexico, by the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association, to feed on and destroy the lantana plant, and reports indicate that this method of controlling the weed has proved successful. Golfers are still hoping that someone will find a bug that will eat crab grass, clover, and a few other weeds and at the same time spare the bent grasses, bluegrass, and other desirable plants on the golf course.