



Better Turf for Better Golf

TURF MANAGEMENT

from the USGA Green Section

Shoe-Sole Questionnaire

In early March, 1959, a questionnaire was sent to Green Committee Chairmen at USGA Member Clubs which subscribe to the Green Section Visiting Service, with the following memorandum:

"The matter of shoe-sole types has been the subject of considerable controversy. May we ask your cooperation in an attempt to learn the opinions of Green Committee Chairmen, professionals and golf course superintendents?"

"We should like to have you talk with your professional and your superintendent about this matter. Then please answer the following questions and return the sheet to us."

There was an excellent response, 231 of the questionnaires being returned. The number of answers does not in all cases correspond to the number of replies received. This is because some replies contained more than one answer to a question.

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1. What kind of grass do you have on putting greens?

Bent 187; Bermuda 9; Bermuda with ryegrass 10; Bermuda with ryegrass and bentgrass 3; Bermuda with bentgrass 1; Bent and Poa annua 8; Poa annua 1.

2. Which shoe sole type do you consider most damaging to putting green turf?

Regular golf spikes 46; Rubber lug soles 50; Ripple soles 135; All equally damaging 5.

3. Do you consider damage to putting greens to be permanent or temporary?

Permanent 15; Temporary 204; No answer 12.

4. Do you feel that putting is seriously affected by the marks left by any of these shoes?

Yes 163; No 52.

Which type shoe?

Regular golf spikes 16; Rubber lugs 34; Ripple sole 127; No difference 13.

5. Has your club taken any action to ban the use of any type of shoe on the golf course?

Yes 89; No 99.

If so, what kind of shoes?

Lugs 13; Ripple 85; Heels 1.

6. Do you think spikes in golf shoes should be limited in length?

Yes 162; No 57.

7. If the answer to number 6 is yes, what do you think the maximum length should be?

Twenty-three different lengths were suggested. They ranged from $\frac{1}{8}$ " to $\frac{3}{4}$ ". More than 73% of the answers were in the range of $\frac{1}{4}$ " to $\frac{3}{8}$ ".

8. Do you think the metal shoulders around spikes have an adverse effect on the putting surface?

Yes 30; No 190.

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Recipients of the questionnaires were invited to make comments. Some of them are quite interesting. A remarkable number commented upon the importance of

the way the golfer handles his feet. Some of the comments are quoted below:

"When greens are wet, all shoes damage, particularly if drainage under greens is poor. I'd vote for conventional spikes in the belief that a tear is less damaging than a bruise."

"Ripple soles do most damage when player turns or pivots on green. Spike shoes cause some damage if player is careless. Also, older members sometimes drag feet and spikes ruffle turf badly."

"Long spikes have tendency to scuff turf. Also, the longer the spike, the heavier they are, causing more damage on closely cut turf and making the hole appear after a few hours' play, as though the cup hasn't been changed for several days."

"Best soles for greens are flat rubber ones."

"I think that any type of sole can be harmful to a putting green turf, especially if the person does not pick up his feet when he walks and turns. The longer and heavier the lug or spike, the more damage, that is, bruising and roughing of the turf."

"Obviously, the bases of greens have much to do with shoe damage. Wet, soft greens tear appreciably when players with ripple soles twist. Lugs leave indents on wet greens. Long spikes kick up nap, however short it is kept, on any green, soft or firm."

"From my own personal observation, the individual in the shoe is the big thing. Some players just don't know how to walk."

"In Seattle it is very damp in fall and winter; spikes only are permitted during this period. For spring and summer play I think ripple soles by far most practical. I have experimented with ripple soles and have found them to be well suited on firm turf. Pro and greenkeeper agree."

"Crepe soles are best and least harm-

COMING EVENTS

August 4

U.S.D.A. Turf Field Day
Plant Industry Station
Beltsville, Md.
Dr. Felix V. Juska

August 6

Rutgers Turfgrass Field Day
Rutgers University
New Brunswick, N. J.
Dr. Ralph E. Engel

September 17 and 18

28th Annual Golf Course Superintendents'
Turfgrass Field Day
University of Rhode Island
Kingston, R. I.

November 16-20

Fifty-Second Annual Meeting of
American Society of Agronomy
Netherlands-Hilton Hotel
Cincinnati, Ohio

ful to greens and give adequate insurance against slip."

"Twisting action of the feet by players wearing lug or ripple soles causes damage to the turf, besides causing indentations on the greens."

"We have a few people using ripples and occasionally lug. The marks made by these shoes make a definite pattern and remain in the green most of the day. A few being used would probably not affect putting. However, I think in large numbers they would definitely affect short or dying putts. The moisture content of the soil also makes quite a difference on the effect of these types of shoes."

"If members could be encouraged to walk carefully and not drag their feet along, much temporary scarring to greens would be obviated."

"The whole thing boils down to this, in my opinion. Some men do more damage than others. We have about six men that ruin a green with any shoe. They are either careless the way they walk, or they drag their feet. I can tell when any of these men play; I can tell it the next day. Some publicity is in order on this."

"We think the type of soles used is more a matter of effect on play than on maintenance. We have not experienced

any serious maintenance problems but have observed that lug and ripple soles mar the putting surface more than conventional spikes. We do think the conventional spike is too long.

“Shoe leather in which there are spikes probably pack the greens more than any rubber soles. If golfers do not lift their feet any length spike will ruin a green. Except for scuffing the green, the deeper the spike holes, the better.”

“All the damage only applies when the player turns on his shoe soles (as when trying to steer a putt). We have no damage or trouble with any type as long as the player uses his feet with care.”

“Ripple soles don't damage greens as far as growth is concerned but the ripples left around the cup make putting difficult. If everyone wore them you would have a washboard for greens.”

“We think spikes can and will do a lot of damage by careless players who twist and drag their feet. Otherwise, ripple sole appears to do more damage.”

“If spikes were used in a confined path with heavy traffic, the spikes would certainly do more damage than ripple soles. However, on greens the play is distributed more or less over the area of the green. It has been our observation that when greens have a reasonably good putting surface, there is very little visible damage from spikes and this is generally easily corrected and does not affect putting to any extent. Ripple soles do not have the tearing effect of spikes, and damage by lug soles, if any, would depend somewhat on spacing of the lugs. If spaced too far apart, they could cause depressions on wet greens and an uneven putting surface. We feel it would be very unwise to recommend banning of spiked shoes or any of the others mentioned.”

“All are equally damaging, but most damage is caused by carelessness, not lifting feet when walking and turning on feet after putting.”

“Putting is not seriously affected if

care is used when walking and turning on feet while or after putting.”

“Spikes should not affect putting surfaces if golfer knows how to walk on a putting surface. Damage to putting surfaces is a personal thing.”

“Worst offenders are those with spikes who twist or drag their shoes, which of course, causes nothing permanent or serious, just annoying.”

“The new plastic spike does more damage because they are thicker at the base.”

“Frankly, I don't think spikes are a major consideration. Where greens are excessively wet, there may develop some temporary damage which is not very significant. The most damage I have noticed from spikes is caused by thoughtlessness by the player in using “body English” in a futile gesture to get the putt into the cup. This could easily be remedied by emphasizing the fact to the players; it is purely a human side of the game. Fortunately most of us have learned better!”

“Carelessness causes most damage with any type, including spikes.”

“Those with ripple soles had them sanded down and apparently no harm to greens has resulted, except when greens are wet.”

“The article in the November, 1958 issue of the USGA Journal was interesting but does not answer the problem. The testers were concerned with “damage” to the putting surfaces. My contention is that the ripples within three to four inches of the cup deflect the putted ball from its normal path. If the ripple-sole boys would keep their big feet at least four feet from the cup, there would be no problem.”

“It is my opinion the USGA may be able to prevail on shoe manufacturers to put shorter spikes on their shoes.”

“We don't have much trouble with golf shoes, thank goodness.”