

The USGA Green Section Record: 1963

The Green Section of the United States Golf Association has recorded and published "information of value respecting the proper maintenance and upkeep of golf courses" for 42 years, in several forms.

From 1921 to 1932, 'The Bulletin of the Green Section' presented a tremendous quantity of knowledge previously unpublished. Later, 'Turf Culture' came into the picture but was discontinued during World War II. In 1940 'Timely Turf Topics' was begun and was a popular medium for dissemination of turf information during the war years and until 1948. 'The USGA Journal and Turf Management', first published in 1948, sought to combine Green Section material with information of general interest to golfers. The 'Journal' has served its purpose well for 15 years.

With the advent of the Green Section Visiting Service, there arose a need for a less formal publication to present short, timely, informative notes to the clubs in each general region served by the Green Section. The Regional 'Turfletters' performed this function.

Now, in an attempt to increase the Green Section's effectiveness, the functions of the 'Turfletters' have been combined with the 'Turf Management' section of the 'USGA Journal'. The new medium is 'The USGA Green Section Record'. Comments and suggestions from our readers are solicited. 'The USGA Golf Journal' no longer contains 'Turf Management'.

The first issue is devoted to one of the most urgent golf course problems of our day—traffic. These pages portray the thoughts of ardent students of golf course management about the matter based on their addresses in the Green Section's 1963 Educational Program entitled "Traffic on the Golf Course". Other parts of that program will be published in the next issue. It is hoped that every reader will gain something of value from this presentation.

Marvin H. Ferguson, Editor

The Traffic Problem

By WILLIAM G. BENGEFIELD, Western Director, Green Section of the United States Golf Association

Imagine a large electronic board flashing lights on and off every few seconds. It is tallying America's population growth by the minute.

Every eight seconds a light flashes on indicating a birth; every 21 seconds, a death; every two minutes, an incoming immigrant; every 24 minutes, an outgoing emigrant.

When the tally is averaged, the net growth of our population is five human souls each minute, three hundred each hour — 7,200 each day. In just twelve years, 1975, the United States will have well over two hundred million people.

Now these are staggering thoughts, but what of our little world of golf and our growth problems? Traffic on the golf course is already a major problem. With a better than 20% increase

in national population in the next ten years, we can expect more than 30% increase in the number of golf courses and better than 50% increase in the number of active golfers.

The majority of our courses were built in the 1920s or before. Al Radko points out that they were designed to accommodate about 250 to 300 rounds of golf a week, during their peak season; small tees and small greens are the rule. Today, we play that many or more rounds on a single day. Several California courses average 310 rounds a day for 365 days a year!

Golf is still played on grass, although we don't know how much longer this will be. You might ask, "How much traffic will grass withstand?" C. J. Cogan, Green Chairman at Irvine

Coast Country Club, Newport Beach, Calif., put it this way:

"One player, with 24 shoe cleats, will average 28 paces per green. 28 paces per green x 24 cleats = 672 impressions. 672 impressions x 18 greens = 12,096 impressions for one player. 200 players, a modest daily average, amounts to 2,419,200 impressions a day on 18 greens. 200 players a day for one month = 72,576,000 impressions!"

What of the various kinds of traffic on a golf course? I'm sure we all think first of the motorized cart.

Senator Ribicoff, of Connecticut, stated at a P.G.A. meeting in Florida: "Please, oh, please, keep golf a walking game. Don't let our fairways turn into highways. I want to be sure a good drive always means a good shot — not a fast tour in a motorized cart."

But carts are a part of the game today. They mean too much in player comfort, golf club profits, and faster play ever to be discarded. Indeed, golf carts are directly related to the boom in golf. But they are a problem and Marvin Ferguson has pointed out that we may be able to "live with them" if they are carefully regulated, if there is driver education, and if remedial measures are made through increased maintenance budgets.

But even worse than the motorized cart is the hand cart in causing turf attrition. There are more hand carts, and they are all over the golf course.

There is still another problem. Have you looked at the spikes on a pair of new golf shoes lately? If golf shoe manufacturers make spikes much longer, they will be in the agricultural machinery business. The length of spikes is becoming ridiculous for the purpose intended. You don't need a half-inch spike to gain a firm footing.

One of the loudest complainers about traffic on the golf course is the super-

intendent. I have heard one, in all sincerity, say, "If I didn't have to put up with those golfers, I could really grow good grass." Of course, he has missed the point. But the superintendent contributes to the traffic problem. Mowing machinery, tractors, jeeps, carts, spreaders, sprayers, etc., must all be used. Often the maintenance crew is not instructed to stay off collars, fairways, and tees whenever possible. Often a maintenance road cuts across a fairway when it might have been diverted behind a green or a tee.

Just what the solution is to the transport problem on a golf course, I do not know. But, let's face up to it. Increased traffic has brought us many new problems. In addition to soil compaction, turf deterioration on tees and collars, ruts, holes, skid marks, and what have you, we must now contend with path maintenance and upkeep, traffic direction, signs, and continual education of new golfers as well as new maintenance personnel.

This is difficult because people play golf for fun and recreation. They resent any list of "do's and don't" on the golf course.

Perhaps, with our growth in numbers and technology, we are also going to grow in "awareness and literacy." Dr. Hans Bethe, noted Cornell physicist, has remarked about the need for science education — not merely to produce more scientists but to create a new literacy in the general public in science. Science for the educated layman is becoming a practical necessity in daily life.

In similar manner, as educational institutions bring us to a higher level of understanding, we may hopefully find a greater appreciation among golfers of the traffic problem. The creation of a new and needed understanding on any subject is not impossible.