



After aeration, cores are crumbled and trash is removed.

Topdressing

by **JAMES R. FULWIDER**, Golf Course Superintendent, Century Country Club, White Plains, N.Y.

In order for a golf course superintendent to carry out an extensive topdressing program, he must be a very firm believer in its merits. I happen to believe that topdressing greens is a very important maintenance practice. Because of the varieties of grass present, I am compelled in my situation to topdress regularly to maintain good putting surfaces.

Not all greens will respond to topdressing in the same manner for a number of reasons, but I think the principal reason is that many greens have several varieties of bentgrass. We know for instance that velvet, colonial, and some of the old south German strains will not tolerate heavy topdressing. On the other hand, strong-growing creepers such as Washington and Penn-cross respond well, and so with them topdressing is almost essential.

Several things must be considered if one does much topdressing. First, it takes time and money.

Second, the course should be closed one day a week so that the job can be done without interruption.

Third, storage facilities are needed, especially if the soil is prepared in advance by the crew and kept ready for use. Good quality commercially prepared mixtures are expensive. In either case, the topdressing mixture must be consistent with the soil below. Otherwise layering could become a problem.

It follows that if greens are topdressed often and regularly, mowers become dull and therefore require more care. Bedknives will have to be replaced more often and more time will be needed to sharpen the machines. A thorough job of cleaning up and washing the soil in would help alleviate the problem with the mowers. Not only would it help the mowers, but the golfers would be much happier.

The amount of topdressing applied at one

time will depend largely on the strain or variety of grass on the greens. Because of these difficulties, the amount of topdressing sometimes has to be varied from green to green. Normally, light, frequent applications are recommended. Some say heavy applications are harmful. However, I believe any amount that can be worked into the grass satisfactorily is not excessive.

If the greens have a tendency to be grainy, light vertical mowing, brushing, or combing prior to topdressing would be desirable.

I try to topdress as often as possible, which is once every three or four weeks throughout the growing season. The soil is applied with a spreader and allowed to dry. The soil is then worked into the green with steel drag mats and wooden rakes. In addition it levels the surface, cleans the green, and, most important, removes the pebbles and rocks which can damage a mower. The green is then thoroughly watered by hand so that the new soil reaches the old soil.

Topdressing is also valuable in decreasing the formation of thatch. Greens which have been topdressed regularly do not have a serious thatch problem.

I want to emphasize that I believe very



The topdressing soil is backed into the turf with the back of the rake.

strongly in this practice, and I am sure my greens would suffer if I didn't continue this important phase of greens maintenance.

Brush and steel drag mat behind modified Overgreen work topdressing soil into the putting green. Note the small wheel directly in front of the brush which keeps the brush from gouging-out or digging into the turf. This device was put together by Superintendent Norman Mucciaroni of Woodland Country Club, West Newton, Mass.

