

THE GOLF SHOE SPIKE—



—Things May Be Getting Better—

The USGA Green Section Staff

The story may be old to some, but the problem is as modern as tomorrow! The conventional golf shoe spike remains one of the main causes of turf injury and soil compaction on golf greens. It not only affects playability and course conditioning, but adds considerably to maintenance costs for correction of compaction, turf wear and tear.

Over the years the USGA Green Section has been concerned with traffic and wear problems. (See research report in this issue, "Turfgrass Wear Tolerance Investigations" by Drs. Robert C. Shearman and James B. Beard, Michigan State). The conventional golf shoe spike first came under suspicion in 1959 from a study conducted by Dr. Marvin H. Ferguson, then USGA Research Coordinator for the Green Section. He found serious turf bruising and long lasting soil structure and compaction problems resulted from the conventional golf shoe spike; i.e., one with a rounded shoulder at the base of the spike, overlaying the shoe sole. He likened such a spike (and there are usually 12 of them on each golf shoe) to a miniature sheep foot roller. He maintained that the weight of the golfer rests not on the sole of the shoe but on the shoulders of the spike itself. To overcome this problem, Dr. Ferguson proposed that a shoe be made with recessed spike shoulders and that only the spike should protrude from the base of the shoe.

The GREEN SECTION RECORD has published numerous articles on this important research (July, 1959; September, 1959; May, 1963 and September, 1971). Progress has been made and shoes with recessed spike shoulders are available today.

But even greater progress is needed and possible. More and more concerned golfers must be alerted and encouraged to buy and wear shoes of this type. The Green Section Staff unanimously endorses the use of golf shoes with recessed shoulders. We believe they will significantly reduce turf injury, soil compaction and improve putting qualities and smoothness around the cup. Their exclusive use would also reduce maintenance costs.

The USGA Executive Committee has now recommended recessed spikes for golf shoes. To further the cause, the following letter has been sent to the 11 leading golf shoe manufacturers in the United States:

January 12, 1975

Dear Sir:

We call your attention to an article by the Green Section Staff that appeared in the May, 1974, issue of the USGA's publication "The Golf Journal." It deals with spike injury to golf turfgrasses, putting greens especially, and suggests that if golf spikes were recessed, we would have fewer injury problems and better putting surfaces.

We earnestly solicit your cooperation in moving in the direction of recessed spikes for golf shoes. We are certain that this step would be in the best interests of golf.

Can we count on your cooperation?

Sincerely,

/S/ P.J. Boatwright, Jr.
Executive Director