

## A Scoopful of Soil...



*Pail of soil with scoop conveniently attached to the golf cart.*

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**R**iviera Country Club, located in Coral Gables, is one of the old, well-established clubs in the area. When the site for this club was selected it was part of the old Biltmore Club, which was established in 1926. In 1930 the 18 holes of the present Riviera Club were abandoned and much of it grew to weeds. In 1946 the Riviera Country Club was formed. Through the years many changes and improvements have taken place.

It has always been difficult to grow good turf at this club. One of the basic problems is that topsoil is practically nonexistent. When Lou Oxnevad, the present superintendent, came to Riviera, he began a long-range plan of improvement. Anyone who knew the course in former years can attest that Lou has done a great job. His efforts have ranged from improved parking facilities and landscaping to complete renovation of the fairways. Our story centers on Lou's fairway improvement program. The common bermudagrass on the fairways provided poor playing conditions. Lack of soil also contributed to the problem. The course is built on a solid coral rock base. Topsoil ranges from as little as one inch to three inches. Lou felt that the only solution was to plant a hybrid bermudagrass and hope for the best. Any other approach, such as hauling in topsoil, would have been too costly. He selected 419 bermudagrass, which was cut and sprigged into the existing turf. Paraquat was used to burn back the common ber-

mudagrass. The renovation program was successful. The limited topsoil, however, is still a problem — especially when divots are taken.

Lou tackled this problem in a rather unusual way. Buck Luce, the club professional, mentioned that he had played a course where some of the members carried a pailful of soil on their golf cars and put a handful down instead of replacing divots. Lou latched onto this idea in his usual dynamic way. First, he reasoned that replacing divots was detrimental because they smothered new healing growth. Second, he knew that replaced divots only remained in place until the next mowing, which knocked them out and chopped them up. However, as a good golfer himself, he knew that replaced divots also made for a fair lie for following golfers.

Filling divot holes would do a number of things that would please the golfers and be good for the grass. Placing soil in divot holes would provide a fair lie for the following golfers. Placing soil in the divot hole would be good agronomically, since grass would be stimulated for regrowth and not be smothered. Best of all, much needed topsoil would be put down. However small, over a period of time this could become significant.

The plan was simple. Provide every golf car with a bucket of good soil and a small scoop. At first the membership was cool to the idea. After a while, however, they found that it was no trouble

at all to place a small scoopful of soil in the divot holes. As membership enthusiasm (and pride) increased, everyone got the fever. Today almost all the members use the system.

Lou experimented with various size buckets and scoops until he found the most practical and convenient sizes. After trying inexpensive buckets and scoops, he has gone to good substantial plastic buckets and metal scoops. He drills two  $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch holes in each bucket about three inches from the top and one inch above the bottom for drainage in case of a sudden downpour. The buckets are fastened to the golf cars at a convenient height. They are out of the way and in no way inconvenience the golfer. They are easy to fill, easy to use. All 58 golf cars at Riviera are equipped with buckets of soil. Every morning the buckets are refilled. About three wheelbarrow loads of prepared soil mix are required each day on the average. In other words,

approximately one-third of a yard of soil is added daily. This may not sound like much, but Lou estimates that the golfers have put out about 25 yards of soil since the plan was started in July. The great thing about this effort is that everyone is serious and conscientious about it.

One weekend they ran out of top-dressing and there were so many demands by the golfers for full buckets that the crew had to use almost pure sand with whatever soil they could mix with it. On another occasion, one group came back five times to refill their buckets in one round.

This effort at Riviera Country Club demonstrates and proves many things: The golfer's pride and concern for his golf course, good communications within the club organization, good communications with the members, and equally as important, a superintendent like Lou Oxnevad is tuned in to the needs of his club.

*Lou Oxnevad, the golf course superintendent at Riviera Country Club, Coral Gables, Fla., shows simple step to repair divot.*

