



Greens are damaged more than any other area on the golf course.

Vandalism – Is There Any Answer?

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SCHOOL IS OUT. It's 9:30 on a summer evening in late June and, within the hour, Ron and Chris (ages 14 and 15) will be under the fence with the ways and means of vandalizing several greens at White Lake Country Club. And they won't be caught! Thousands of other Rons and Chrises around the country will be doing their thing on thousands of other golf courses all summer long. There seems to be no real answer to this spirit of hostility, willful destruction, and defacement of things of beauty.

A police study based on British and American experience in 1978 shows that

the term vandalism does not appear in Great Britain's criminal law, and vandals are usually dealt with by the Criminal Damage Act of 1971. In the United States, the term vandalism appears in the laws of only seven states. More commonly, the states' statutes refer to criminal mischief, malicious property destruction, malicious mischief or criminal damage to property. State laws vary widely in their scope and structure and in relation to fines and punishment.

The FBI Uniform Crime Report defines vandalism as willful destruction or defacement of property without con-

sent of the owner. It is found in all social and economic levels throughout the United States, and there seems to be no area that is not affected. Vandalism is largely associated with youth and adolescence. It is classified by six motives or types:

1. **Acquisitive Vandalism:** property damage to acquire money or goods.
2. **Tactical Vandalism:** property damage done intentionally to advance some other end.
3. **Ideological Vandalism:** carried out specifically to further an ideological cause.



(Above and opposite page) To prevent vandals playing with the flagsticks, some clubs are bringing in the flags each night.

4. Vindictive Vandalism: property damage to a selective target for revenge.

5. Group Vandalism: property damage to a selective target for revenge on an owner or representative.

6. Graffiti Vandalism: paint, spray paint cans, or marking pens to express personal identity.

Sometimes school problems are responsible for vandalism, but in other cases, it may result from restricted opportunities. Subcultural differences in values and attitudes may also be at work. Prolonged adolescent dependence seriously damages personalities, labeling, and stereotyping, and serve as another cause.

Golf courses are prime targets and are being hit harder each year. Invariably the most affected areas are the greens, fairways, and then tees. If golf cart storage areas are not well protected, they soon become attractive to the nighttime marauders. Many golf carts are wrecked each year through vandalism, and yet few vandals are seriously hurt and even fewer ever caught.

In 1974, a group survey made in a midwestern state was completed by 840 Farm Bureau Councils representing more than 11,000 people living in 84

of the state's counties. Vandalism topped the list of the biggest crime problem in their communities, followed by theft, burglary, drugs, traffic, and drunken driving. Unfortunately, youths were viewed as the principal group committing these crimes. Three out of four Farm Bureau Councils reported a noticeable increase in crime in their local communities. Alarming, a shift in the type of crime committed was also noted and found to be toward drug-related crimes and theft.

There are some basic reasons why children become involved in vandalism. Some authorities believe the emotional needs of children are a paramount cause. There is the need for love and security and the need for responsibility. Many people think anger, hate, and lack of concern for others are common reactions to being unloved and rejected and that these feelings may lead to vandalism. Boredom can result in lack of new experiences that will lead the youth to excitement and destructive gang activity.

If children are denied the opportunity to develop responsibility, they may not recognize the rights and property of others. Most vandalism is done by

individuals from ages 13 to 17, touching practically all society from the city to suburbia to the country. The only difference in each of these is how it affects the condition of the area being vandalized.

The damage done by any individual may be classified as a felony or misdemeanor, with the cost of repair or replacement determining which category it falls in. When damage amounts to more than \$100, it is a felony, and, when less than \$100, it is a misdemeanor.

Most acts of vandalism go unreported and unsolved. However, a recent study of complaints filed against young offenders revealed the following information:

1. Investigative leads lacking since most offenses are unwitnessed.
2. Group activity generally predominant.
3. Most apprehended offenders at golf courses are white males.
4. Cars are often used in the act.
5. Multiple acts are usually committed.
6. Juvenile offenders develop special language describing activity.
7. Most arrested cannot explain behavior.

8. Offenses generally committed on weekends.

9. Most acts done between 8 p.m. and 2 a.m.

10. Damages range in the thousands of dollars.

11. Types of property destroyed and weapons used varied.

Judge Olin M. Price, juvenile judge of Clarke County, Georgia, is a member of the Board of Directors of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. He has developed a list of interesting statistics that show the extensiveness of malicious destruction of property and other acts by humans and how it affects other people. He has found:

ON A NATIONAL LEVEL:

- Sixty percent of reported vandalism occurs at night.
- Many persons and places are vandalized more than once in relatively short periods.
- About one in six places or persons is victimized twice during the year.

• Vandalism varies greatly depending on the locality, socio-economic level and region.

• Every person in this nation has violated some laws many times, and most violate some law daily. However, most of these violations are thought to be petty or not serious enough to deal with. On the other hand, the following is a Crime Clock of serious offenses occurring within every hour in this nation:

1979	1980	
1,114	1,670	Serious crimes
119	230	Violent crimes
59	79	Robberies
3,600	4,100	Burglaries
600	700	Larcenies
120	130	Auto thefts
2	3	Murders
6	8	Forcible rapes
69	79	Forcible aggravated assaults
5,600	6,200	Acts of vandalism to property

ON A LOCAL LEVEL:

• Most acts of vandalism are unsolved due to the nature of the offense — hit-and-run tactics, spur-of-the-moment anger, frustration by otherwise law-abiding people. A great many acts of vandalism are thought of as pranks and/or mischief by the offenders. Many acts of vandalism go unreported due to the nature of the events, such as a broken window, damaged landscape, painted items, egg throwing at cars, homes, etc.

• In Clarke County, Georgia, seven vandalism cases were tried in Juvenile Court in 1977 and 11 during 1980. There were probably several thousand acts of vandalism during this time, but only a very small percentage ever are caught or go to court.

• If you don't deal with juries, courts, or security forces often, you can't believe you are living in or near so much misdoing. We have to be reminded by the 11 o'clock news: "Do you know where your kids are right now?"



Vandalism is costing golf clubs millions of dollars each year, and much of this is counted in forced security measures. Each morning, the golf course and all buildings are routinely and thoroughly checked by many superintendents for possible damage done by vandals resulting from spur-of-the-moment anger, planned approach to destroy something belonging to other people, disgruntled ex-employees, and even golfers themselves. Many maintenance buildings and clubhouses have had detective warning devices installed to discourage entrance. However, too many golf courses are still wide open to vandals — no fences, no ditches, no berms to exclude intrusion.

Fences are usually the first attempt to keep night invasion from the golf course. Fences will not keep all traffic out, but they discourage many would-be vandals. High four-wheel-drive vehicles and motorcycles find entry through the main road and/or service road, and once in, they are difficult to contain. Old telephone poles or logs placed in areas and secured in some way are excellent in discouraging such intruders. Posts or poles can be buried in the soil with or without concrete to

stop on-course traffic. Sharp nails, broken glass or sharp metal in boards, however, should not be used, because the club could be liable for a lawsuit. One of the best protectors around a golf course is a drainage ditch or moat filled with water so only swimmers or boats can enter the property.

More security gates are being constructed each year, and some new housing developments have built security gates before the golf course or clubhouse is constructed or is ready for use. In large cities, protection of golfers requires more and more security. One club in South Florida, during heavy play in 1981, had four security men patrolling the 18-hole course on small motorcycles, two on the first nine and two on the second. There was also security at the front with a parking attendant. TV cameras are now being placed in strategic locations around some properties and in the clubhouse to improve security. They provide wide coverage and require fewer guards.

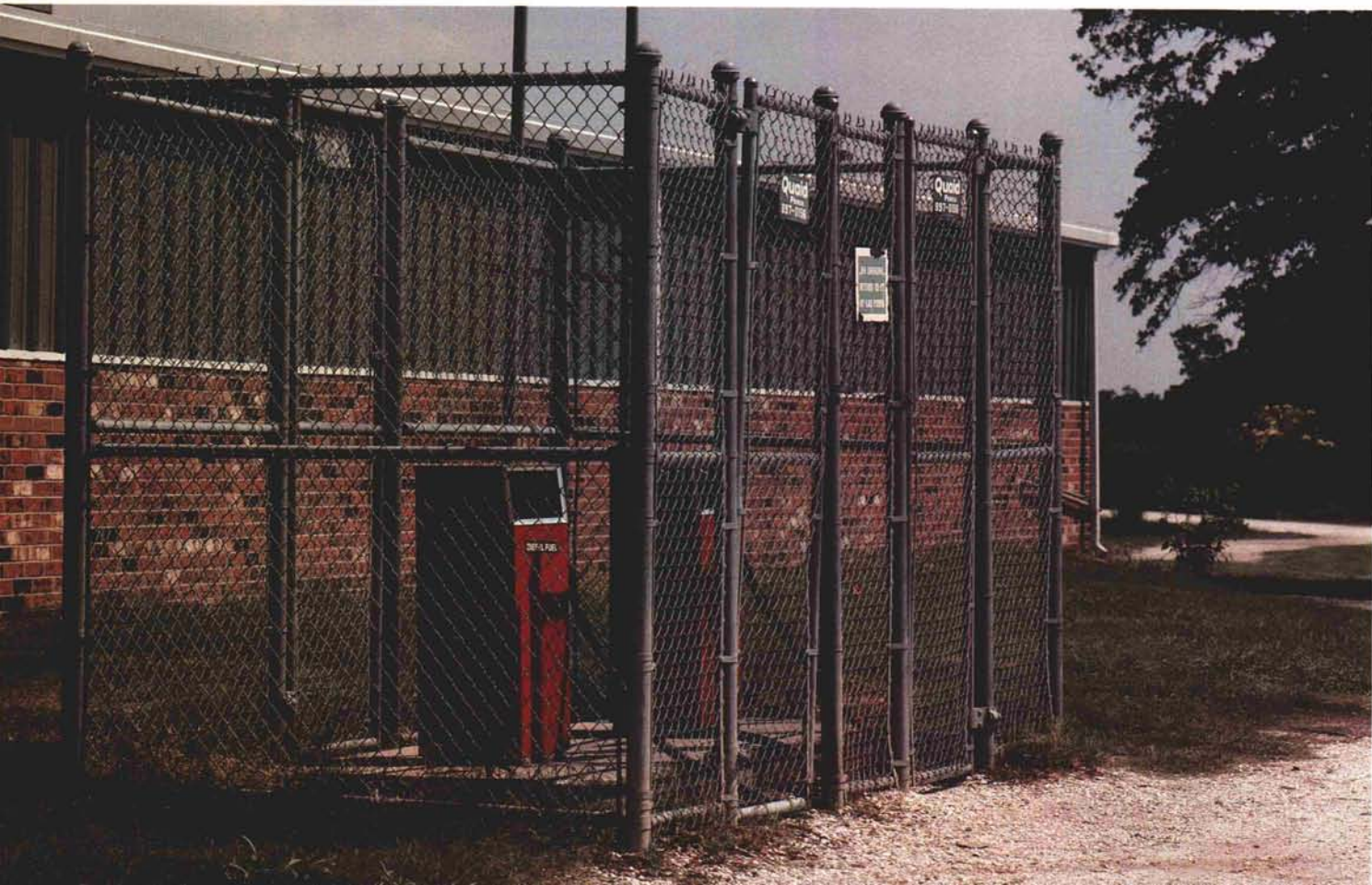
From time to time I have received telephone calls from clubs that have caught vandals in the act, but, for one reason or another, do not wish to go to court. What to do? Oftentimes the

apprehended one is a child of a club member, and avoidance of publicity is desired. I have discussed this problem with many superintendents, professionals, managers, and club officials over the past 25 years. The best course of action seems to be one of cooperation on the part of all concerned, with parents and child agreeing to pay for all damages.

The most recent success story I have heard occurred in Florida, where teenage boys were caught robbing soft-drink machines and causing other damage some years ago. Two of the boys and their parents were very cooperative, with the boys paying for the damage by working on the golf course. The boys soon became interested in the game and took lessons from the professional. Happily, in 1981, they received scholarships to play on their college golf team. Thanks to M. G. Orender, of Diamond Hill Country Club, near Tampa, Florida, these two young men are now well on life's way. Unfortunately, their ex-friend has proven to be a repeater in unlawful acts.

In another case, a club I visited in Naples, Florida, had a restroom being repeatedly vandalized. The superintendent found a hole cut in the fence

Prevention — here the best cure.





(Above) Thousands of dollars in damage each year to stolen golf carts.

(Below) Now you see him — now you don't.



near a lake and a housing area near the course. Silent detectors were installed in the restroom and tied into the sheriff's department switchboard. Late one afternoon, about sundown, the signal went off. Unfortunately, by the time the superintendent got to the restroom, no one could be found. Nevertheless, an approximate time was established for the vandalism and the next stage was set. The hole was left in the fence and, on the following afternoon, the superintendent played with each foursome starting on the tee before the hole where the fence was cut. He played two holes with each foursome, then circled back out of sight and kept repeating until two youngsters were seen near the hole in the fence. Two boys, 11 and 12 years old, came through the hole with their BB guns. The superintendent went over and asked the boys what they were doing.

"We are just hunting birds."

"I'm sorry, but we can't do that on our beautiful course, can we?" they were told.

He treated them nicely, as only a superintendent with two small boys himself would do. As their conversation

continued, one of the boys finally said, "It's too bad someone has damaged your restroom." This was the key statement that aided Superintendent Clint Smallridge at Royal Poinciana Golf Club in Naples, Florida, and the sheriff to get a confession, for how would the boys know about the restrooms? The boys' families are paying for the damages.

Stories of vandalism go on and on. Certainly the numbers are already high and we can expect even higher ones in the future as populations increase around our golf courses. Vandalism is a part of life and a part of our cost of operation. For our own mental health, we should be willing to accept that fact. Nevertheless, we should also prepare ourselves and our courses as best we can to reduce and contain this growing problem. It's worth the effort. If you need assistance, contact the National Juvenile Clearinghouse Operator within the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (JCJRS). A toll-free number (800-638-8736) makes the Juvenile Justice Services readily available to those who are interested or already working with youths.