



*The damaged area.*



*Introducing new mature plants.*



*Replacing the cores.*

# Rough Times

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**I**N OCTOBER, 1985, I attended the Scotland International Golf Greenkeepers Association Conference and later played golf at more than 15 of Scotland's finest courses. Some of these are very old, with golfing history going back to the early 1400s. Consequently, this was an excellent opportunity to see how it all began.

Almost immediately, Americans will notice how the maintenance of grasses around the sand bunkers and the rough grasses next to the fairways differ from home. These grasses are not neatly groomed and cut short. They are taller, with little evidence of any maintenance. In the United States, the same areas are cut relatively short, especially around the bunkers. In Scotland, they have

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historically allowed the roughs to grow naturally. One exception is a secondary type of rough, usually eight feet wide, at the fairway perimeters. These grasses are maintained two to three inches tall next to the one-half-inch cut on fairway grasses.

Usually, Scottish roughs are a mixture of fine fescues and bentgrasses that are ideal for the purpose. Because of the low soil fertility and cold temperatures in Scotland, all grasses grow slowly. Surprisingly, some fairways are cut only five to ten times annually because of the climate. These unusual features make it possible for the golfer to find his ball in the rough and attempt to recover. It may still take an outstanding shot, however.

Because of longer growing seasons and more favorable weather conditions in the United States, many of our golf courses would become unplayable if these grasses were allowed to grow naturally. Some degree of maintenance around our bunkers and in our roughs is necessary, and it is expected by American golfers. Nevertheless, many American courses could significantly reduce the intensity of their management in these areas and thereby reduce maintenance costs and at the same time add greater definition to the golf course itself.

The USGA/GCSAA Turfgrass Research Program is supporting the work of plant breeders in developing minimal maintenance turfgrasses for golf. This program will have tremendous influence on golf course maintenance, not only in this country, but worldwide. Even now, zoysiagrass is becoming more popular around bunkers because of its slow growth rate, traffic tolerance, and lower maintenance requirements. What will tomorrow bring? Better grasses without sacrificing turfgrass quality and lower maintenance budgets is the answer. That's a priority for all golf course superintendents.



*Low maintenance.*

*An innocent Scottish rough.*

