

Practical Solutions for Today's Problems

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FOR THE 11TH CONSECUTIVE YEAR the annual Green Section Education Conference was held in conjunction with the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America International Turfgrass Conference and Show. This year more than 1,200 people attended the Green Section's program on Monday, February 17, at the New Orleans Convention Center. James T. Snow, National Director of the USGA Green Section, introduced the morning's program of 21 speakers who addressed this year's theme, "Practical Solutions for Today's Problems." Following are the full proceedings.

The Best Turf Tips from the Green Section Staff

One of the most popular annual features of the Education Conference is the Best Turf Tips. This year, 16 of the Green Section's agronomists reported on some of the helpful ideas and ingenious innovations they came across while visiting golf course superintendents in every part of the country during 1991. Four other Turf Tip sessions appear later in this issue.

Guideposts for Good Drivers

by JAMES M. LATHAM

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MOTORIZED golf carts have been considered by some to be necessary to the game of golf ever since 1912, when it was feared that the rubber ball would require courses to be redesigned to extraordinary lengths. These contraptions have now become such a significant fiscal force that many golf operations depend on them as major sources of income. It is difficult, however, to reconcile highly visible income with the unseen, insidious damage done to the soil and the easily ignored problems in turf.

Several means of reducing turf damage have been tried, but few are truly acceptable. Concentrating wear in the rough is no real answer, even in bermudagrass country.

The good people at the Essex Country Club, in Windsor, Ontario, must be more cooperative than most or are more easily trained, since they have successfully used a system of positive, passive



Simple white posts with red tops signal Essex Country Club golf cart drivers to exit the fairways at that point and drive on the side, off the fairway. Spikes in the base permit the posts to be moved easily.

guidance for several years. A variation on this theme is used at other clubs, but the Essex system, implemented by superintendent Stuart Mills, CGCS, is the subject of this report.

Golf carts have the run of the course when soil conditions permit, except near the greens. Guidance comes in the form of simple white posts with a red top, fitted with a steel rod at the base, as a spike. It is easily moved from place to place, as needed, to spread wear. The only guideline is that the golf carts exit the fairway and be driven outside the post, *wherever* it is located. If the guidelines are followed, traffic around greens can be shifted to the left or right rough, near or not so near the greens. This eliminates signs, ropes, and painted lines in an unobtrusive way.

The same guidance principle follows for directing traffic away from ground under repair, heavily worn areas, or wet spots. These devices are smaller

The key to cooperation is communication rather than coercion. Reasonable people usually respond to reasonable requests if they know why. Tire tracks indicate the driver in the background, and others, stayed outside the post. No group is perfect, though, as shown by the tracks on the inside of this post.

diameter white poles (like broomsticks) with blue tops. The message is simple and understandable: Avoid this area! Again, no ropes, signs, or paint.

Let's say that these passive, positive guidelines are only 75% effective. It is doubtful that other restraints get much better compliance. Good communication usually gets good cooperation, and reasonable people respond to positive guidance more readily than negative restrictions. These fixtures present a much less cluttered landscape.



Wheels of Misfortune

by JAMES E. CONNOLLY

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GOLF CARTS can provide benefits to golfers and golf courses. Those unable to walk long distances can still enjoy the game by riding in a golf cart, and revenue produced from rental and sales provides financial benefit to courses, golf professionals, and those involved with marketing golf carts. In some instances, golf carts can speed play, allowing for faster rounds of golf, a higher volume of golfers, and increased revenue.

These benefits, however, are often overshadowed by the negative effects associated with these units. Golf carts are sometimes viewed as motorized menaces, causing damage to golf course grounds! Golf course superintendents are all too familiar with the damage to soil structure and turfgrass caused by cart traffic. Uncontrolled, it can destroy playing conditions. Another related problem is the presence of unsightly directional accessories in the form of signs, ropes, and barriers.

Woodland Golf Club, located in Auburndale, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston, set out to solve the problem. They knew that controlling cart traffic would reduce turfgrass damage and

maintain the beauty and appearance of the golf course. Past attempts to control traffic with ropes and signs were somewhat successful, but physical directives cluttered the landscape and detracted from the appearance of the course. Another approach was needed.

Superintendent Norman Mucciarone, with the help of his son, David, and the Green Committee, recommended a program that not only described the policy for cart operation, but carried stiff penalties for violations. The board of directors accepted this plan and distributed it to the entire membership.

There is a saying: *People do what's inspected — not expected.* This is true when it comes to cart rules. Most courses have a written policy on cart operation, but they lack the ability to enforce the rules. Without the fear of penalty, golfers continue to ignore cart rules. For this reason, Woodland Golf Club developed a series of penalties for violations. They are as follows:

First Offense — Written Warning

Second Offense — Formal Admonition from the Board

Third Offense — Suspension of Cart Privileges for One Month

Each member registers for a golf cart in the pro shop, where a number is assigned. Any member or crew personnel can report a violation. The date, violation, and cart number are turned in to the green chairman on a prepared form. More than 50 violation notices were sent out during the first summer of the program. The membership has accepted the program and is participating in the beautification of their golf course.

The benefits of the program include:

1. No ropes, signs, posts, etc. The maintenance crew does not have the hassle of moving these items during mowing.

2. The daily maintenance of the ropes and signs themselves is eliminated.

3. Damage to the course is greatly reduced due to the fear of penalty.

4. Respect for the property is instilled in the membership and staff.

Woodland is a private club, but this program may be applicable at a public golf course with some alterations. Perhaps a higher rental fee could be charged on a violator's next visit to that golf course. This would help control the chronic offender. One public course