

## Should Putting Greens Be Kept Closely Cut at All Times?

### Some Expressions of Opinion from Men of Wide Experience

Some problems are better solved on the basis of long experience than on that of shorter but more intensive experiments. Perhaps the matter of mowing the putting greens longer or shorter may be one of these problems. But even after long experience, different men do not reach the same conclusion. Of course local factors such as soil and climate may affect the results at different places—and sometimes a preconceived notion determines the conclusion. Be that as it may, opinions from men of long experience are always interesting, and the testimonies of several are here presented:

"In reply to your question as to whether it is beneficial to allow the grass to grow longer on putting greens at certain stages, I would say that whenever the greens at Merion are injured by brown-patch or in any other way, no matter what season of the year it is, we find that the turf comes back much more quickly when the grass is allowed to grow for a few days and the mowers are set up. This year we kept our greens longer than usual, and with the exception of the small brown-patch we had much better greens during the summer months. The length of the grass was not the cause of the small brown-patch, as it may easily be seen by looking at the grass on the edge of the greens, where we cut more closely than we do our fairways. This was practically not touched at all. Our experience has shown at Merion that if the grass is kept three or four inches long in the rough it is much stronger and healthier than the grass on the fairways, and that the fairways are much stronger than the greens although we spend all the attention possible on the greens. We believe that during the summer the mowers should be raised and the grass left longer than in the spring and fall. Of course it should be left fairly long before winter sets in so that the greens can be used in the winter time. In this climate, and under our conditions, we are reasonably sure of our results, as we have now tried it out for eleven years."—*Hugh I. Wilson, Merion Cricket Club, Philadelphia, Pa.*

"The close cutting of putting greens has its advantages and its disadvantages. Personally, from the player's standpoint, I like close-cut greens. However, a great deal of discretion must be used in the matter. You will find a wide difference of opinion on this subject. Close cutting is entirely advisable, and satisfactory, under certain turf and climatic conditions, while under reverse conditions it is impracticable and unwise. As a general practice, for a normal season, I believe it is safe and sane to set the cutting blades up an eighth inch during the hot months of July and August; there is less liability of burning and less evidence of wear and tear. Many students of turf advocate a trifle longer cutting during the hot weather as a precautionary measure, to furnish shade and protection for the roots of fine grasses. Under very close observation, the following points would, in a large measure, prove the determining factors in arriving at a decision: (a) the texture and nature of turf and general condition of same; (b) the climatic conditions—hot or cold, wet or dry seasons; (c) the personal element, involving the degree of the dependability of greenkeeper and his mechanical and human working units; (d) the questions of risk and possible extra expense attached to maintaining a close-cut, fast, and delicate green as compared with a slower but perhaps more fool-proof condition of turf."—*A. J. Hood, Detroit Golf Club, Detroit, Mich.*

"The practice of cutting putting greens too closely and too often is very general. We are cutting  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch. To skip mowing for a day or two occasionally is beneficial; but I believe in cutting one length always. I do not consider there is any benefit to be derived from allowing the grass to grow abnormally long at the

beginning of the season, as it afterwards takes some time to recover from a short cutting."—*W. J. Rockefeller, Inverness Club, Toledo, Ohio.*

"Our experience at Oakmont has been strongly in favor of close cutting. We find that by this method the fine grasses are encouraged in their growth and the coarse grasses are kept fine, rather than encouraged to become coarse. We have tried letting the greens grow rather long in the spring, but have always been disappointed in the results; the roots tend to come out of the ground, and the grass becomes coarse, so that it takes about a month of close cutting to get the greens back to normal condition. We are for close cutting at all times."—*Wm. C. Fownes, Jr., Oakmont Country Club, Pittsburgh, Pa.*

"Referring to your question on the cutting of putting greens closely as a general practice under all conditions, it has been my experience that in the spring when the grass is growing rapidly, it should be cut very often, but it should not be cut too closely to start with. The mower blades should be lowered until the proper height is reached, and the greens cut as often as possible during this growing period. As soon as the growing period in the spring is over, cutting should be very materially reduced, and if it becomes very dry it is safest to discontinue altogether. Toward fall, when the grass begins to grow, close cutting should be again resorted to. I think that a mistake is often made in cutting too closely. There is a happy medium which makes for good putting, and it also keeps sufficient height to enable the grass to maintain itself in a healthy and sturdy condition. I believe that every greenkeeper must work out for himself the exact height which will satisfy the members of his club and at the same time insure a good, healthy turf."—*J. K. Bole, Mayfield Country Club, South Euclid, Ohio.*

"Our greens have been better than ever before, notwithstanding the drought which prevailed here. I have cut them every day as closely as possible, watering at night. Therefore my conclusion is, if water can be used, close cutting is beneficial. I would not allow the blades of grass to grow coarse by sparing the knife."—*James L. Taylor, Ekwanok Country Club, Manchester, Vt.*

"In regard to the practice of cutting greens closely, I might state that such has been our practice here at Utica, and, as far as the writer can see, with no detrimental effect to the turf on our greens. In the spring we start cutting our greens on the basis of the height at which we stopped in the fall. Within four or five cuttings, we have cut the grass down to our permanent or summer height. This height we maintain until after the first of October, when, with the colder weather in this region, we gradually raise the knives a quarter of an inch, as we have found that the turf winters better if, during the slow-growing period of October and November, it is allowed to grow a quarter of an inch higher than the summer height. Personally, I can not see the advantage of allowing the grass to grow up and then cutting it back short again. For one thing, it would seem to me, a treatment of this kind would tend to affect the putting surface and also the appearance of the green. The fine bents, I am convinced, do much better if they are cut closely at all times."—*Sherrill Sherman, Yahmundasis Golf Club, Utica, N. Y.*

"I am very glad to give you my personal thoughts on the matter, but I have a desire that my name shall not be used in connection with any of my opinions. In the spring, grass should be allowed to grow before it is cut too short; that is, the knives should be set high so that the grass will get well started. It is not desirable to cut grass when wet. Thus it is a bad practice to cut greens early in the morning when there is a heavy dew, for the reason that the wheels that revolve the cutting knives slip and mar the grass. Personally, I do not like a slippery green, where the ball will roll unduly. In the fall, the grass should always be left long enough to carry over the winter. It is important to have at least a seven-blade mower, so that the grass will be cut evenly. I do not believe in rolling, if rolling can possibly be avoided. I have always had better luck by proper top-

dressing and a proper method of filling up the valleys, than I have had by rolling and pressing down the hills, which simply come back. Greens should be watered and not sprinkled, as the roots seek water, and we want good thick turf. All these matters come under the question of how often grass should be watered and how closely it should be cut. When there is a long drought, grass should be kept longer than when there is the usual rainfall."—(*This is by a very competent but modest gentleman.*—EDITORS.)

"I think putting greens should be cut as closely as possible, without scalping. Cutting should begin early in the spring, and throughout the growing season the knives should not be changed unless to cut more closely. It is good practice to cut every day. I do not agree with those who hold to the opinion that the grass should be permitted to grow longer through the hot summer months, as from my observation this practice injures the turf. It has been my experience that the bents, which are the finest of our dwarf grasses, do best when kept closely cut, as in this manner taller-growing grasses are not given a chance to crowd out the bent plants. In mixed greens of bent, bluegrass, redtop, and rye-grass, close cutting in warm weather has a tendency to discourage the last three grasses, giving the bent a chance to make greater growth. Such greens should be lightly watered every day. Remember that 90 per cent of the roots of the fine bent grasses lie within one and one-half inches of the surface; therefore weekly watering, or even watering three times a week, does not furnish sufficient moisture where it is mostly needed. In my opinion the close cutting of fine turf grasses is comparable to the trimming of hedge plants, such as privet and hemlock; in both cases a dense growth of new plant-parts results. The same thing is also true with hay crops, such as timothy, clover, and alfalfa, as it is well known that when the crop is harvested for hay a finer, closer growth of the stubble develops. Moreover, a close, dense turf is more resistant to hard usage, heat, the washing of soil as a result of heavy storms, and the numerous insects which feed on grass roots. I would therefore suggest that putting greens be kept cut short even during the hot season, and that they be watered daily, and at times even twice daily."—*Walter S. Harban, Columbia Country Club, Washington, D. C.*

---

## Tip Cuttings for Vegetative Planting

By K. F. KELLERMAN

The Bannockburn Golf Club, Glen Echo, Maryland, has recently carried through a complete reconstruction of its No. 1 green with a result so satisfactory both in general improvement of the course and in cheapness of construction that it seems worthy of recording. The green is approximately 7500 square feet in extent, protected by two shallow sand traps at the left, the foremost one partly encircling the entrance to the green, and also by a shallow sand trap at the right and a grassy hollow behind the green ending in a ridge approximately 3 feet in height at the back.

By taking advantage of the natural contours of the ground, the cutting and filling was reduced to a minimum, and all fills and contours constructed from earth removed from the traps. The green was planted with creeping bent by the vegetative method the 18th of September. In accordance with suggestion from the Green Section, instead of securing mature vegetative stolons, as is ordinarily done for planting greens, the material used consisted entirely of clippings from another new green planted the previous season and not yet in play. The turf on this latter green had been uncut for a considerable period, so the tip stolons were cut with a sickle and then