



A 5-unit mower equipped with wide-faced wheels and roller casters to support the assembly frame and relieve the cutting units of its weight

A Costly Experience

A number of instances have come to the attention of the Green Section where clubs have turned the whole matter of the layout and construction of their golf courses over to dealers in golf supplies. It is not a logical arrangement. This does not reflect on the honesty of commercial concerns that employ golf architects as agents, but it is not the way other big construction jobs are let. We have never heard of a case where the dealer who supplied the materials was given carte blanche for the plans and specifications of the club-house.

It has been the purpose of the Green Section ever since its organization to help golf clubs get full value for the money they spend. But in many cases the Green Section does not have an opportunity to advise in the matter of the big expenditure—that of constructing the course. It is much more satisfactory to the Coast Guard to keep a ship off the rocks than to salvage a wreck; and so we print the following statement of a typical case that it may serve as a warning-light to some other club contemplating constructing or remodeling a course.

Not long ago we received the following letter from a golf club:

"After carefully studying the Bulletin of the Green Section of the United States Golf Association I am bold to ask your opinion on the following, and I trust you will be frank in making your replies, because I deem it of vital interest to our club and to myself since my views are bitterly assailed and if I am wrong I would like to know it.

"In the summer of 1921 a representative of a seed concern secured the contract to build 16 new holes on our course, the consideration being that we should purchase our seed and materials from the firm he represented. A very capable superintendent came at the rate of \$300 per month plus travel expenses and board at the club-house while on the job. He constructed a splendid set of greens. These greens were built with a layer of cinders, in which the drain tiles were set; on this, a layer of inverted sod; and then the seed bed, which was composed largely of top soil, sand, and great quantities of commercial humus. The humus was impregnated with some kind of 'acid,' as it was represented that the acid seed bed was necessary for the propagation of Chewings' red fescue which was to be planted. We were promised such velvety greens of fescue that the salesman would win his reward for the general supervision without charge, in this demonstration, by showing others in this section that the finest putting green in the world could be grown here, as well as elsewhere, if the proper methods were used.

"We paid this concern \$7,000 for seed and material, and expended over \$35,000 in labor and other items in the construction work.

"The seed planted was one-half red fescue and one-half redtop. It was represented to us that the redtop was necessary as a 'cover crop,' and that within a year, or a year and a half at the most, it would be entirely crowded out by the fescue.

"We quickly got a stand of grass, and were all enthusiastic. The following spring and summer the greens were in fairly good condition but the stand of turf was rather thin. Whether there was any red fescue on the greens at this time, I am not prepared to say; I do not know.

"In the fall the greens were rather poor, and it was necessary, on the advice of the same salesman, to fork the greens and top-dress and reseed them.

"This spring we had a crop of mainly coarse grass, and on investigation I learned that it was redtop, and I could find no trace of the red fescue.

"During the summer our greens were practically barren, even the redtop disappearing in July and August, and the only things that were green were some white clover and weeds. It was represented that clover would not grow in the acid seed bed; and upon investigating the reason for its being there, I was told that during the previous fall the greens were in such condition that forcing was necessary and that therefore a dressing of bone meal was used, and that this produced the clover. We had a tremendous crop of weeds, and our extra expense for weeding this summer was close to \$2,000.

"All through the summer the greens were in such terrible condition that there was much dissatisfaction among the members. The Board of Governors decided that the thing necessary to do in order to pacify the members and to bring the course into proper condition, was to engage the services of an expert to recondition the greens.

"This expert, charging \$400 for four personal visits and typewritten instructions covering the procedure, proposes the following (bear in mind that all seed and material is to be furnished by his company):

"First.—'Your greens are hidebound and sour, and the first operation is a liberal dose of Bordeaux mixture.' I questioned the application of Bordeaux on the ground that the lime in the mixture would induce the growth of clover and was in direct opposition to the 'acid' seed-bed theory. The operation was abandoned. I also questioned the statement that the greens were hidebound, because they were as porous and friable as greens possibly could be; and it was my theory that the barrenness during the summer was caused by the lack of moisture-holding properties occasioned by the incorporation of so much commercial humus in their original construction.

“Second.—He prescribed a special spiked roller, at a cost of \$316, to be used in aerating the greens preparatory to the application of the top-dressing and in spiking the top-dressing and seed into the greens afterward. I remember reading that the use of spiked rollers for such work was questionable and that the object desired could better be accomplished by raking and disking.

“Third.—The top-dressing was to be preceded by the application of a liquid named * * * at \$1.50 per gallon f. o. b. New York, this liquid to be diluted with water.

“Fourth.—The top-dressing was to be prepared with one ton of * * * fertilizer at \$110 per ton, in connection with soil, sand, and rotted manure. My contention is that there is no commercial fertilizer on the market that is worth \$110 per ton for growing grass on a golf course, and that the use of such was wholly unnecessary.

“Fifth.—He proposed to sow a mixture of 80 pounds of red fescue and 20 pounds of South German mixed bent, a total of 100 pounds of seed, per green. My contention is that this is entirely too much seed for reconditioning greens, and that the use of the red fescue is inadvisable, in view not only of our own previous experience but also of the fact that my investigations disclosed the fact that not a single greenkeeper in our entire district had ever produced a red fescue green, notwithstanding all had tried it time and again.

“Sixth.—He proposed a top-dressing of oyster shell.

“Seventh.—He proposed a covering of sheep manure as a mulch for the winter.

“I argued forcibly against the above program, but without avail, believing that better results could be obtained, and at a vast saving in money and labor, by simply raking up our redtop greens, preferably with a disk, and then in a top-dressing, or seed bed, of good rotted manure and soil, sowing about 25 pounds of South German mixed bent seed to each green, and then giving it the ordinary care that greens should have. Am I right in my belief? It seems to me that the operations of this ‘expert’ are right in line with the warnings given in your article entitled ‘Quacks and Suckers.’

A member of the Green Section replied to this letter as follows:

“You ask for a frank reply to your letter. I will give it. Your club has been outrageously swindled. Nearly everything done in the-construction and seeding of your greens was contrary to common sense and the experience of all who have ever been successful in growing fine turf. We know of a dozen or more instances where golf clubs have gone through the same heart-breaking experience that your club has. In fact, it was the frauds perpetrated by these golf ‘gyps’ that made it necessary to organize the Green Section. It seems to be the policy of these fakers to do such a miserable job of construction and seeding that their high-priced experts can get another opportunity to soak the club for additional seeds, fertilizers, and equipment. Redtop and red fescue help admirably in such a nefarious scheme. The seeds of both of these grasses germinate quickly, and the seedlings last long enough so that the course can be turned over to the club in a very promising-looking condition; but when these grasses are cut down to putting green length, especially in a climate such as you have, they last but a very short time.

“As to the recommendations of the expert, I do not see that I can add anything to the comments you have already made. I agree fully with everything you have said.

“Now, what is to be done in a case like this? It seems to me that the

first essential for the successful growing of turf on your greens, is a realization on the part of the members of your club that they have been soundly bunkoed. They should then show a willingness to discard for all the time the advice of these self-styled experts and try only those things which experience has shown to be needed for growing turf. My advice is to get along as best you can with these greens until next summer, and then, about the latter part of August, open them up, scrape off as much of the humus and cinders as you can, and pulverize and mix together all the remaining top soil and sods, using a team and disk harrow. The sods should be sufficiently rotted by that time so that they will cause no trouble. Then I would seed to bent grass, from the 1st to the 10th of September, using not to exceed 5 pounds per 1,000 square feet of green, or I would plant them vegetatively with creeping bent. If the finances of the club do not allow for treating all the greens at one time, I would take one or more greens, and do the job right while about it. In the meantime I would suggest that you get along with as little expense as possible on these old greens, seeding them each fall to redtop, and depending upon the summer weedy grasses, such as crab grass and others, for turf during the hot weather. It is a hopeless undertaking to try to produce good turf with what you have, by hand-weeding.

"I assure you that the Green Section will be glad to render your club any assistance it can to help it out of its present unpleasant condition. There are several golf courses in your district which have solved the grass-growing problems to the extent that they have very good turf. I feel sure that the chairmen of the green committees of these clubs will be glad to share with you the benefits of their experience."

Appreciating your greenkeeper.—Earl B. Kent, Highland Country Club, Attleboro, Mass., in his letter of December 22, 1923, writes: "My greensman has just gone to the Galveston Country Club, Galveston, Texas, to take charge of that course. * * * This is a promotion for him I promised him several years ago,—that as soon as I thought he was ready I would try and place him with a larger club. * * * I have another lad who has worked for me five years, and after two or three more years I will do the same for him. I think this way of doing things keeps the men happy and gives them something to work for."

The editors of *The Bulletin* are always glad to publish contributions from greenkeepers, chairmen of green committees, or others having information of interest to present to its readers on the subject of turf maintenance.

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