

A Plea for Better Care of Equipment

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The most important business department of any golf club and of most country clubs is the department having charge of the golf course. A good greenkeeper, efficient and contented men, and good equipment in good condition are the essentials of this department. However well chosen may be the greenkeeper and his men and equipment, really satisfactory course conditions can not be maintained unless the equipment itself is of the proper kind and kept in prime condition. It is to this subject that the present article relates.

Let us consider, first, ordinary hand tools as distinguished from grass cutting apparatus, machinery, and rolling stock. Assuming that no greenkeeper would endeavor to work his men with broken or rickety tools, we come to the everyday condition of ordinary implements, such as spades, forks, rakes, and hoes. It is probably fair to say that ordinarily no attention is paid to the working edges of such tools, and yet a great deal of labor is wasted by lack of such attention. To illustrate, take the ordinary spade. Two workmen are sent out to turn over a piece of turf or loam. One of them has put the edge of his spade against a grindstone or emery wheel and given it a chisel bevel, so that the cutting edge, instead of being perhaps a sixteenth of an inch or more in thickness, is nearer a hundredth. The other goes out with a spade which has been used for some time but had no such attention. Obviously the sharpened spade can be driven down with less power than the other. The difference will show plainly in a day's work, and, multiplied throughout a season, will show in real money.

The same point carries through similar tools. Oftentimes it becomes advisable to rake putting greens preparatory to surface seeding and dressing. A rake, the teeth of which are so blunt that a considerable pressure upon the rake stale is required to make them bite, is a labor-wasting tool compared with a rake having sharp teeth, and it does poorer work. Carried through several days upon the greens, this means a substantial loss which new rakes or a bit of attention at the emery wheel would avert. I am not suggesting knife edges nor needle points, but I mean edges and points which are normal for such tools.

Now let us look at cutting tools, such as sickles, scythes, and mowing machines. Every one has a general feeling that such implements should be kept sharpened, but it too frequently happens that men do not take pains to examine the tools or machines carefully and give the proper attention where necessary. Hand mowing machines may be sent away to be overhauled and sharpened once or twice during the season. They come back and we say "that's that" and pay no further attention until the next fixed time for overhauling. It is forgotten that from the time such blades are sharpened the edges begin to go back and continue going back. Some knives become dull more rapidly than others, on account of differences in steel or the amount of grit encountered while at work; but they all travel the same route more or less rapidly. The only sound policy is to have such edges examined frequently and to have every blade of every machine kept keen all the time. Here again the result will be less fatigue and better spirits on the part of the men, a more even carpet of grass upon the greens, and reduced expense.

Furthermore, there is too much carelessness in accepting results when the machines have been supposedly overhauled and sharpened. Great care should be taken by the greenkeeper to examine every blade of every mach-

ine whenever it has been sharpened, whether at his workshop or at the shop of an outside mechanic. Every machine should be known to be right before it is put into use. It is often of value to take several mowers to one green and try them out side by side. One will do better work, another can be pushed with less effort, and so on. Such comparisons will speedily show the way to valuable corrections.

The same things are true regarding power mowers for fairways; but they need even more careful and constant attention, because they are drawn over rougher ground by heavier power, which necessarily wears the machinery more severely. The difference between good fairways and poor ones may often be traced to the single fact that the cutting edges upon one course are kept clean and well adjusted while those upon another are allowed to become dull or poorly adjusted, or both. A fairway well mowed does not need to be mowed as much as one poorly mowed, and it will always be in better condition. In short, sharp blades save waste and create values.

If men are sent to putting greens with dull weeding knives, they will not do as much work nor will their work be done as neatly as if those knives were sharp. A hole cutter will make poor cup holes if the edges of the cutter are not properly beveled and sharpened. A hand turf cutter which is dull compels a man to step on it twice to sink it through the turf where, if it were sharp, once would send it to the hilt. Any workman must waste an hour or more per day with such a tool. That hour costs fifty cents or more. In a week, the loss is three dollars per man. Multiply that by your number of men and by the number of days in the season. Your figures will be fallacious, because turf cutting does not go on all the time; but they will show something, because the principle does go on all the time in all kinds of work. Why use a breaking-up plow with a dull colter? It means a clogging plow, exasperated men, nervous horses, poor work, and wasted money. Why make two strokes with a dull hoe when one stroke with a sharp one would do the same work?

There is nothing new in all this; the point is, that many of us are careless about using the knowledge we already possess. Our attention needs sharpening.

Another place where we need tuning up is in the matter of keeping machinery lubricated. A greenkeeper may be well judged by the condition of his oil bearings and cutting edges. Indeed, if the chairman of a green committee considering candidates for a position as greenkeeper would examine the equipment which the candidates had been taking care of and learn the condition of their cutting blades and machinery bearings, it would be of greater value than to do a lot of running around in looking up references as to personal character, although both points ought to be investigated.

In too many golf shops, the arrangements for keeping machinery oiled are haphazard. One finds a much dented oil drum in a dirty corner and a few dirty oilers on a window sill from which oil is dripping to the floor. Where such conditions are found, it may be taken for granted that the machinery itself is not being kept properly cleaned and lubricated. If a man is sent out with an oiler the nose of which is gummed with dust and stale oil or pinched flat, the machinery with which he is to work will ordinarily show corresponding dirtiness and bad conditions. Every such condition means waste of man-power, needless destruction of machinery, inferior turf condition, and overcost of course upkeep.

Machinery can not take care of itself. It must be looked after in every way. Close attention should be paid to keeping the cylinders and

carburetors of motors clean and well adjusted. Every knock and rattle should be promptly taken out, every worn or broken part should be promptly replaced. This is essential work and can not be neglected without inevitable waste and damage. Why use a fertilizer spreader which has been allowed to rust so that instead of doing crisp work it drags and bungles the job? A pinch of dry graphite between the slides would probably reduce the operating power by half and improve the results proportionately. Why keep on using a putting green roller that has picked up moist worm casts which have rusted on and made the surface of the roller bumpy? Such a roller is on the way to ruin; and so are the putting greens which are in charge of a man who permits such conditions.

Why push valuable equipment into a heap in a shed to rust and dry out through the winter when with a little labor those same tools can be cleaned up, the metal parts oiled, and the woodwork painted so that in the spring the workmen will have bright, clean, keen tools with which to work, and be benefited by the good influence which tools in good condition inevitably produce?

I sometimes think that next to a good greenkeeper, the best single individual employee a golf club can have is a man who has the knack of keeping tools well repaired and well sharpened and who loves to do that work. In practical experience, it has been found of great advantage to arrange the working time of such a man so that when the workmen deliver their implements at the end of the day he can spend some time in going over them and bringing them all up to the standard of good working efficiency. Two or three hours per day spent by one efficient man in this way tells through all the work of all the men all the time.

The loss to golf clubs resulting from neglect of tools and machinery, with attendant labor discontent and necessity of renewing equipment too often, is really serious. Having in mind conditions I have seen when nosing around in greenkeepers' sheds and watching men at work outside, I can not believe that this loss averages less than two or three per cent of the budgets. This means a clear waste of \$500 or \$600 per year to clubs having green budgets of \$20,000. I believe that in some clubs the loss approaches five per cent, or \$1,000 per year. These figures look large on paper; but let the man who doubts get into direct contact with the workmen and machinery and expense bills of several clubs, comparing the poorly managed ones with the well-managed ones, and he will soon become convinced that a substantial and avoidable waste is going on all the time.

The whole matter comes to this, that it is not enough for us to realize in a vague and general way that tools and machinery should be kept sharpened and oiled and in good repair. We must get down to actual daily conditions and see to it that everything is actually right all the time; and therein lies a pressing duty upon all green committees and greenkeepers.

Golf Turf in Britain

By C. V. Piper

The beauty of British grass turf is proverbial. Rural England is a lovely country, which has often been likened to a great park—a large greensward with noble trees and scattered groves. This is the impression that Britain makes on the minds of most travelers, and with them we agree. On the whole, the grass turf of Britain is far more beautiful than that of the United States. There is a notable absence of areas of land