

A Professional's View of Turf Problems

By John B. Mackie

Before attempting to present to you a professional's view of turf problems I should like to give you a professional's view of the professional, of the game of golf, and of golf course construction.

If some one were to ask me when and where the first golf professional came into being, I am afraid I should have to answer him like Topsy in "Uncle Tom's Cabin"—He wasn't born; he just grew. But if his name is unknown, his faults unwhispered, or his praise unsung, it is because his "origin," like that of the game itself, is shrouded and obscured in the mists of a long-distant past. And if, from that far-off time, down through the passing years and under every changing condition, the game still holds those charms which have endeared it to so many and still retains the traditional traits of honesty and sportsmanship which are so essential to the playing of it, it is because golf professionals in many lands and in every clime have preached and practiced those undying fundamental principles, to the extent that the professional is now everywhere recognized not only as the game's traditional partner but as its inseparable companion as well.

In the advancement of the game in this country, the professional can look back with a feeling of pardonable pride on the long string of victories that American golf has won in the past few years; yet he is ever conscious of the facts that while building he builded well and that the seed which he sowed has fallen in fertile soil.

When the pioneer Pro. came to this country about forty years ago, he not only found himself in a new land, but in so far as the inhabitants were concerned he had to teach them a new game. Golf was unknown, golf clubs unheard of, and golf courses had to be built; and if those that were constructed at that time seemed crude and unscientific when compared with the standards of today, they had one advantage in that they cost little to build, and the quality and manner of their upkeep proved no untoward hazard to the nation of beginners who had just started in to play the game. This was the "beginning," the day of the gutta ball and the time of the cop bunker. Across almost every fairway, somewhere between the tee and the cup ran a high man-made ridge, and beyond lay the putting green, painfully symmetrical, in the shape of a complete circle or a true square.

While the game in America is still comparatively young, yet in the few short years that it had been played prior to 1902 the inventive genius that is supposed to be common to the people of this country got to work, and the result was a "rubber-cored ball," which did much to make the game popular (if not easier), especially for the poorer players and those who were just taking it up. The new ball was faster and longer than the old gutta and considerably larger than the ball of the present day.

The cop bunker at 150 yards, presenting a compulsory carry and now no longer a hazard to be afraid of, was filled in, and a new system of bunkering was inaugurated which had as its purpose the placing of a hazard that would leave with the player a choice of club and direction and at the same time provide a varying risk proportionate to his decision and as a test of his skill.

The liveliness of the new ball, especially on the putting green, showed up the weakness of that all-important part of the links, and

greenkeepers set about to find some method of keeping the putting surface free from worm casts.

Shortly afterwards, a Mr. Rushmore, of Garden City, put on the market a bichloride of mercury solution which proved most effective and which, as you all know, is still a standard method of keeping our putting greens free from worms. This was the beginning of the end of what our Washington friends fondly describe as the "cow-pasture era."

After that we had the lime era; then the mechanical age, the coming of the power machine to the golf course, when tractors took the place of horses and single mowing units gave way to gangs of three to five.

In April of 1917 the Rhode Island State College Experiment Station issued a bulletin showing that soils treated with fertilizers having an acid reaction were better adapted for the growing of the fine turf grasses that are so desirable on the golf course. The experiments had covered a period of years, from 1905 to 1916. This was the beginning of the era of experimentation.

A year or two later the Green Section of the United States Golf Association was formed and took up its work for the improvement of the American golf course.

The driving force back of this project was the late Dr. Piper, and we all miss his presence and genial personality at these annual meetings. Along with Dr. Oakley, he did some wonderful work for the cause of good greenkeeping.

A review of the findings of the Green Section at Washington would seem to indicate that the conclusion arrived at by the Rhode Island station twelve years ago as to the desirability of an acid condition in the soil of a putting green had been closely followed and that their theory was correct. The Green Section recommended sulphate of ammonia as the fertilizer best suited for producing the ideally acid condition, and for a time this fertilizer was looked upon as a sort of a cure-all for the many and varied troubles that fall to the greenkeeper's lot. In the meantime we have had with us the scourge of brown-patch, large, small, and lately all-embracing in so far as the putting greens on some golf courses were concerned. "Where have our greens gone?" was a common query at many of the Metropolitan clubs last year. This condition has brought about a feeling of doubt in the minds of many, and during the past few months there have been unmistakable signs of revolt against and a decided sense of uncertainty as to the advisability of continuing the use of sulphate of ammonia as the chief source of fertilization for the putting green.

Greenkeeping in these latter days is unquestionably an intricate job. We always seem to be nursing a sickly person who is ever in need of care, and when it comes to giving him the necessary medicine we are too apt to be like that type of patient who, finding that a certain medicine seems to help him, proceeds to kill himself by taking overmuch. Such was the case during the lime period, when some golf courses received a coat of whitewash every other week; and to such an end it is now feared the continual striving for an acid condition in the soil of our putting greens is going to lead us. The sections where doubt exists are not isolated cases, and a real effort will be necessary to refute or substantiate the existing belief that all the

ills that have beset the greenkeeper for the past few years can be traced to an overanxiety on his part to follow the acid trend.

To those—and they are many—who have already gone back to the lime kiln for a cure, I would advise them to do so in moderation; if they feel they have traveled too far in one direction, it may not be necessary for them to retrace their steps to the starting point, for somewhere along the road the true path will be found.

To this end, it lies within the reach of every one of us, as it is the duty of every one here, to lend a helping hand. The men at Washington are fine, capable fellows. You will find none of the dogmatism of the theorist in their make-up, and should you wish to approach them with a suggestion or a problem you will get all the help at their disposal and a willing ear for what you have to say.

Green Cost Analysis

By J. W. Bryant, Jr.

What I shall say concerns cost analysis rather than cost accounting, and I suppose it is appropriate that the subject should be the last thing on this program. With the mounting costs of golf course maintenance this question is overlooked too much.

The Detroit District Golf Association, which I represent, was organized in 1919. We have 38 member clubs, and out of those 38 member clubs, 37 I believe are members of the United States Golf Association. We derive benefits that are numerous from our affiliation with the United States Golf Association, and we would not like to forfeit that affiliation.

The Detroit district has tackled a great many problems in golf club affairs and club management, and I think one of the most interesting subjects has been that of cost analysis in the maintenance and construction of golf courses in our territory. We have dues from our members that amount to \$50 a year for clubs within a certain radius, and \$25 for clubs beyond that radius up to 50 miles. In our informal discussions of the affairs in the district we find a very wide range in the figures covering the costs of golf course maintenance among the member clubs. We have clubs of 18 holes in these informal meetings making the statement that they are operating at somewhat less than \$5,000 a year, and ranging on through 9-hole courses a little above that figure up to \$36,000 a year for the 36-hole courses. It began to be more and more a subject for discussion at our little noonday gatherings as to why this great difference in costs.

In talking about it informally, we found that there was a possibility that many clubs were not properly reporting expenses which were chargeable to course maintenance, and other clubs perhaps were charging to course maintenance certain items which perhaps should not be charged. We found, for instance, that some clubs were using water through their house meters, the house carrying the burden of that water cost rather than the green committee. We found that green committees were using pumps to spread their water, and the cost of running these pumps instead of being charged to the green committee was charged to the house committee. We found that some of the men working on the golf course were originally on the payroll under the house committee, and in the course of time their duties had been shifted to outdoor work, and yet the payroll entries had not been