



Better Turf for Better Golf

# TURF MANAGEMENT

from the USGA Green Section

## WORK OF A CLUB GREEN COMMITTEE

*The Green Section Committee of the United States Golf Association conducted an Educational Program at the Williams Club, New York, N. Y., on January 25, 1957. The coordinator was Edwin Hoyt, of the Wee Burn Country Club, Darien, Conn., and the program proceeded in three parts:*

1. *An introduction to green committee work by Allan Brown, Chairman of the Green Committee, Montclair Golf Club, Montclair, N. J.*
2. *A panel discussion of the relationship between the Green Committee and the Club administration, moderated by Dr. Marvin H. Ferguson, Mid-Continent Director and National Research Coordinator of the Green Section.*
3. *A panel discussion of the relationship between the Green Committee and the golf course superintendent, moderated by Alexander M. Radko, Eastern Director of the Green Section.*

*A transcript of the proceedings follows:*

### Analysis and Planning of Green Committee Work

By ALLAN BROWN

*Chairman, Green Committee, Montclair Golf Club, Montclair, N. J.*

**T**HERE are approximately 5,000 golf courses in the United States, and nearly 3,000 of these are private clubs.

The chances are that somewhere today, at this very moment, the president of one of these clubs is trying to enlist the services of a club member as Chairman of a Green Committee. The member probably knows very little about agronomy or the

normal problems of golf course maintenance. Furthermore, it would be rare indeed if he had any written record of the previous Chairman's plans. This is due to the fact that most clubs do not have a long-term program of golf course maintenance.

The handicap of not having a permanent record of such a plan is best illustrated by an incident that occurred a few

years ago up in Manchester, Vermont. We had difficulty with drainage after heavy rainstorms on the low holes at the Ekwanok Country Club. We tried to locate the position of hidden drains to see if they were plugged, and we failed to find any map or similar record in our files of the course which would enable us to locate the position of these drains. Furthermore, the Superintendent had passed away a short time before, and there were no records in his effects which would show us the location of these drains.

In the course of exploring these low holes in an attempt to locate the drains, we lowered the level of the brooks that ran alongside of the fairways and in front of the greens, and at a depth of several feet exposed the ends of 20 drains, all of which had been plugged by seepage of silt, with the result that water was backing up into the fairways instead of draining into the brooks.

As a result of this discovery, we undertook a complete survey of the course, having maps made of each and every hole, and



**A close-up of erosion of the banks of the brook at the fifth hole, third nine, Montclair Golf Club, Montclair, N. J.**



**Members are often unaware of erosion and deterioration because it is out of sight or below the surface of the ground.**



**A sunken drain across the middle of a fairway at the Montclair Golf Club caused this depression to appear at the fifth hole, third nine.**

locating all features of each hole to scale, such as water lines, drainage ditches, bridges, conduits and so forth.

Last year, the President of the Montclair Golf Club of which I am a member, asked me to serve out the term of the late Ken Burns, who had been Chairman of the Green Committee. I accepted this assignment because it gave me an excellent opportunity to compare the problems at Ekwanok with those at Montclair.

Ekwanok is a short season club, located in the Green Mountains of Vermont, where they have fairly warm summers and extremely cold winters. The course is relatively flat, with the exception of one or two holes. It is also one of the oldest courses in the country and, architecturally, is typical of many courses designed around the turn of the century.

The Montclair course, on the other hand, is a 36-hole affair, with the four nines starting and ending at the clubhouse. Part of the course was built in the 1890s, and another part in the 1920s, so that, architecturally, there are some antiquated features, as well as those that require a considerable amount of labor.

Some of the features of the course have been neglected for a number of years because money has been diverted into other things, such as tennis courts, additions to the clubhouse and so forth.

Many of the members were not aware of erosion and deterioration that had taken place because it was out of sight or below the surface of the ground.

Again, we had scale drawings made of all the holes, and we plotted every feature of every hole, so that we could have a permanent record for the Green Committees of the future. We then indicated what needed to be done to the course to put it in excellent playing condition and estimated the cost of each job with the order of priority for each hole.

Some of these projects called for the redesign of some of the more antiquated holes, the removal of bunkers that were no longer hazards and the elimination of some of the features that required excessively high maintenance costs.

We were fortunate in having Robert

Trent Jones, a prominent golf architect, as a member of the club, and we therefore had expert counsel in redesigning certain features of the course.

We also had the benefit of Carl Treat's advice. He had been Superintendent of Montclair for many years.

After a number of meetings, we selected certain projects which we recommended be completed in the current year and additional projects to be undertaken next year and in the future.

We recorded this information in a manual called "A Long-Term Maintenance Program for the Montclair Golf Course." The purpose of this plan was:

1. To provide a permanent reference record of all features of each hole for the Green Committee.
2. To indicate "jobs-to-be-done" as part of a long-term golf-course maintenance program.
3. To provide maintenance-costs history by all features covered in cost studies.
4. To identify course parts requiring extra maintenance and repetitive repair.
5. To promote better planning and budgeting and provide work standards based on experience.
6. To promote better worker efficiency and more accurate cost accounting.
7. To provide standard procedure for:
  - a. Defining the authority and duties of all responsible for golf course maintenance.
  - b. Architectural changes in the course.
  - c. Purchase of machinery and supplies.
  - d. Hiring of labor.
  - e. Establishment of a research program to investigate latest developments in golf-course maintenance.

We also set forth procedures to follow in making architectural changes in the course, systems for the maintenance of equipment and so forth.

We also included a section on accounting procedures, showing the cost trends over five-year periods for labor, machinery, materials.

By this method, we were able to make comparisons with other clubs throughout

the country to see how our maintenance cost compared with theirs and to determine whether there was any way in which we could operate more efficiently.

In closing, I should like to offer the suggestion that the USGA Green Section appoint a committee to carry out additional research work for the benefit of its member clubs to determine such things as:

1. A uniform accounting system so that we can have the same basis for comparison among all clubs.
2. A uniform nomenclature for all those highly specialized features that are peculiar to a golf course.
3. A definition of golf course maintenance, so there will be a clear distinction between that and club ground maintenance.
4. A standard depreciation practice.
5. A determination of the latest and most successful maintenance procedures, such as the painting of machinery, flagsticks, benches, ball washers and so forth.

Such a committee could no doubt determine from its members' requests many other phases of golf course maintenance to study, and this information, in turn, could be disseminated to the members of the USGA for the benefit of all.

**Q.** What is the best way to prevent brook erosion?

**A.** Cut the banks back at an angle and put riprap in it.

**Q.** What is the best way to drain a wet area?

**A.** The USGA should determine the answers to these problems for its member clubs. Just the other day, I witnessed an entirely new method for installing a drain. Tile and loose stones were not used. It is still in the experimental stage. It may be the solution to this problem.

**Q.** Before planning these repairs, did you consider the possibility of doing the work with the aid of aerial scale photos? (This chairman got a scale map of his course from the United States Department of Agriculture, Aerial Photographic Service).

## DO YOU KNOW YOUR GOLF?

(Answers to questions on page 18)

1. Miss Betty Jameson
2. (a) Once, 1938. (b) Twice, 1952, 1956. (c) Twice, 1929, 1933.
3. James Braid, Harry Vardon, J. H. Taylor. J. H. Taylor lives in Devon, close to his native Westward Ho!
4. Fred Haas played in the Walker Cup of 1938 and the Ryder Cup of 1953. Tommy Armour had the distinction of playing for Britain in the unofficial amateur international of 1921 and for the unofficial United States professional team in 1926.
5. Gerald Micklem. He has represented in all the post-war matches except 1951.
6. False (see Definition 14).
7. A player *may* send his caddie forward (see Rule 34-1) but he risks the wrath of his fellow golfers.
8. Mr. and Mrs. John B. Beck, of England. Mr. Beck captained the British Walker Cup Teams in 1938 and 1947. Mrs. Beck captained the last Curtis Cup Team to visit this country in 1954.
9. British Amateur, British Open, U.S. Open, U.S. Amateur.

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**A.** No.

(In discussion, it was proposed that a committee of the Green Section should be appointed to carry on research for a uniform accounting system, uniform nomenclature, maintenance costs by unit of measure definition of golf course maintenance, differences between course maintenance and ground maintenance, standard depreciation practice, latest and most successful maintenance procedures, best methods of drainage, and preventing erosion, and that the USGA should distribute this type of information).

**Q.** In allocating money for a monthly budget, is your budget flexible enough to provide for an emergency?

**A.** Yes. The budget includes a reserve fund for emergencies.

**Q.** Do you keep individual cost records of equipment, such as tractors?

**A.** Yes. In this way we know when to trade or junk it.

There are two methods of purchasing equipment.

- (1) Charge it off against expenses.
- (2) Set it up as a capital investment and depreciate it at an accepted

rate, setting aside reserves to replace equipment when worn out.

**Q.** On your drainage project, did you take advantage of engineering and technical knowledge available from other sources than golf clubs such as the government?

**A.** Yes. Al Radko advised us.

## **Relationship between Green Committee and Club Administration**

*Panel discussion moderated by Dr. Marvin H. Ferguson, Mid-Continent Director and National Research Coordinator, USGA Green Section.*

*Charles G. Chapman, Member, Green Committee, Country Club of Detroit, Grosse Pointe Farms, Mich.*

*William G. Harding, Chairman, Green Committee, Dedham Country and Polo Club, Dedham, Mass.*

*Dr. Andrew P. Virtuoso, Chairman, Grounds Committee, Whippoorwill Club, Armonk, N. Y.*

*Elmer J. Michael, Superintendent, Oak Hill Country Club, Rochester, N. Y.*

*Charles K. Hallowell, Mid-Atlantic Director, USGA Green Section.*

*David H. Halle, Chairman, Green Committee, Suburban Club, Pikesville, Md.*

**MR. HALLE** (enacting the role of newly appointed chairman of a green committee): How long a sentence should I serve? What is the best method to use in choosing members of the green committee?

**DR. VIRTUOSO:** There should be at least one individual on the committee who is not chosen by politics. The Chairman should be a man who is willing to learn. He should know his limitations. He should have some knowledge of agronomy. He should have time to do some reading of agronomy journals and pamphlets. He should live near the golf course. He should visit the course while the men are working so that he can understand their problems. He can never give sound answers until he understands the problems. If the superintendent plays golf, it is good policy to play a few rounds a year with him. It makes it easier for the superintendent to understand the importance of correct raking of bunkers, correct cutting of fairways and greens, filling divot holes and marks left by maintenance equipment. There are a great many turf problems, and some of them are caused by green committee chair-

men. The chairman should not become an agronomist. The superintendent is hired for that. The chairman should know his work, but not try to be an expert. Often the chairman becomes a busybody.

**MR. MICHAEL:** It is to the benefit of both the club and the superintendent for the superintendent to get firmly acquainted with the green committee chairman. For this reason, the chairman should serve a fairly long term. It takes time for them to get to know each other, how to get along, how each thinks, how to produce for the individuals you work with. There should be an understanding through the years. In this way, the club will benefit and the staff will benefit.

**MR. HALLE:** I have no knowledge of agronomy. Most green committee chairmen don't. Is there any way to get basic knowledge of the problems I will face? Is there any written material I could study?

**MR. HALLOWELL:** It is possible for the chairman to get information. The USGA book, "Turf Management," is an excellent source. The chairman can attend turf conferences. The Golf Association of Philadelphia sponsors a chairman-superin-