



Better Turf for Better Golf

TURF MANAGEMENT

from the USGA Green Section

The Superintendent Serves Golfers

By Dr. J. M. Adams, M. D.

(Highlights from a speech delivered by Dr. Adams at a meeting of superintendents, club managers and club officials earlier this year in Chicago. The meeting was conducted by the USGA Green Section.)

My approach to the subject is for the golfer who isn't familiar with the green superintendent's problems and who doesn't care for the golfer who wishes to relax and, who wants the tees, fairways and greens cut perfectly, the traps raked, and everything perfectly done as he steps up on the first tee. He doesn't care what fertilizer is used; he doesn't even know there are fungus and nematode infections of grass. Nor does he realize that you're on a budget. He pays enough in dues to have the finest conditions of playability without argument!

Most of you are then confronted with a greens committee. A greens committee is a group of men who, with their appointment, have overnight become experts in the field of course management. Like all committees, they can't accept the possibility that things are going along quite well, but rather there must be changes made. Economy is the key note. They see that there are too many men on the crew (after all why does it take 6 men to fertilize one fairway?) They wish to change some traps; cut the greens either higher or lower; but most of all they must make changes.

This is a paradox. It is one of the few situations in business today when your job depends on your ability to get along with a boss or a group of bosses who know less about your job than you do. Get one committee in line with your thinking, this takes 2 or 3 years, and whambo, you have a new committee. You must be a diplomat as well as an agronomist. What we probably need is a greens superintendent's psychiatrist sponsored by the USGA.

There are areas of golf course management that I feel can be improved upon from the golfer's point of view. I'm sure that most of these points represent no problem to most of you, but they are things that I have observed as I play golf on the Detroit area courses.

Expects Manicured Courses

In recent years the U. S. golfer has come to expect that his golf course really have that manicured appearance, no longer does he expect a cupped lie in the fairway; he wants that ball sitting nicely so that he can take full advantage of the lie. The rough should also be cut and manicured so that the

ball is found easily and he can use a No. 4 wood out of it. The traps should not have any foot prints and the greens no ball marks. This change was brought home to me while watching a recent television series which viewed many of the fine courses throughout the world. It was fascinating to me to see courses in England and Scotland *not* manicured, thus representing more of a challenge to the golfer. Their greens budget must be low. Be that as it may, here in America the golfer expects a manicured course.

In addition to the finer points of golf course maintenance, there are other features of normal care that are a source of irritation to the golfer that bear mentioning.

For one, arrange greens crew work so that it interferes as little as possible with play. Normally you have all the greens and tees cut early in the morning. Fairways, on the other hand, because of rain or heavy dew, sometimes aren't cut until late in the morning and therefore extend into the afternoon; thus justifiably interfering with play. I have seen a man on a tractor either pay no attention to the golfer and continue to mow, or I have seen him stop his mowing in close proximity to the ball and watch the golfer with piercing eyes. The result too often is a flubbed shot. Wouldn't it be better to instruct the crew to put themselves in the golfer's position and to stop his rig far enough away not to interfere? Such common courtesies could well extend to the entire operation and make your job much easier. Take spiking greens as an example. You know that this procedure is vitally important to the proper and healthy care of the greens, but most of your members have no concept of this procedure's importance. All they know is they are invariably spiked the day they are entertaining an important customer. Please plan your spiking at a time during the week or during the season when there is no special event.

This leads to another possible source of help in alleviating many misunderstandings that occur. The greens superintendent and his Greens Committee should utilize their club's publication to notify the membership of their varied activities and why there are times when they must be inconvenient. You are dealing with intelligent people and they will understand your problems if they are told.

Tell The Membership

Educate your clients so that they know how difficult it is to grow and maintain golf course grass under conditions that are particularly demanding. Tell them of the variety of different grasses you have used and the reasons for their particular use. Let them know when and why you fertilize, say a word about fungicides and what they do. Let them know your problems maybe they will even sympathize with you. At least I would venture to say they will take better care of the course — they might even replace fairway divots and repair ball mark damage on the greens.

Insist that your club manager furnish you with a list of the many events that involve the golf course. Knowing these, you can plan your work accordingly. You should go over these special events with the manager at least once a week in order to avoid slip up — remember if you spike the greens the day of a special event, you'll be blamed, even though partially unjustified.

Tell The Crew

Another important phase that produces good member-green crew relationships is in instilling within the crew a genuine feeling that they are an important cog in the machinery. Most of these men probably don't play golf and don't understand the need for meticulousness. However, if you have a coffee bull session in the club house with the crew and the Greens Committee at the start of the season so that the crew gets to know the committee

members by name, great dividends are paid. At these sessions the importance of their particular jobs can be brought out, and they will respond with initiative of their own. Give them a feeling of belonging to the club organization.

Here is where the man who cuts tees can understand why it is important that the tee markers be changed each time he cuts the tees — you know it fits in well with good maintenance practices — but if he hears from the greens chairman that it is also important from the golfer's point of view (it changes the play of a given hole) he's more apt to do it without prodding. This would alleviate the often seen repetition of the same tee marker position day after day or all markers are suddenly at the back tees (oh, how the members scream).

Give a Reason

Similarly, to prevent compaction of the greens you all know that rotating pin placement is important, but the man who doesn't understand the challenge to the golfer will do this in a stereotype fashion, using no imagination. He is satisfied just putting a hole somewhere on the green. However, if one of the greens committee takes an interest in him and shows him the various excellent pin positions on a given green and why they are, two things are immediately accomplished: 1 - better maintenance practices are carried out, and 2 - the golfer will appreciate the challenges brought forth.

Let me now dwell on a few small points that are a constant source of irritation to the golfer. One concerns the ball washers and towels. There is nothing more nauseating than a ball washer with stale rancid water and, coupled with this dilemma, finding no towel on the washer. Instilling personal pride in your crew will alleviate this oversight. Also, a plea to the membership to quit swiping the towels would help.

Why not equip your tractors with a small box on the frame to hold papers, small twigs, and general debris which can be picked up as the crew cuts the fairway and rough? A small effort can produce a neat orderly course.

Efficiency dictates that the benches on the tees be picked up, painted and stored early in the fall before your crew is cut back. But here the member who enjoys his golf in the fall of the year does not feel kindly toward this kind of efficiency.

Many of the points I have discussed must seem ridiculous to most of you. But they do occur on many of our courses and these courses have superintendents who don't possess the curiosity that motivates them to attend meetings such as this one where there is an opportunity to learn.

A lack of curiosity eventually shows up in the appearance of the course.

This fact was apparent to me when I read a survey of 40 clubs in the Detroit area made by Mr. Charles Chapman, our greens section chairman. His study showed that in spite of the well known fact that Bluegrasses and Fescues do not thrive with short cutting heights, 10 with substantial preparations of Bluegrass and 3 with Fescue on their fairways cut them at $\frac{3}{4}$ inches or less. One course with 100% Bluegrass fairways cut at $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Two courses in our area who cut their fairways at $\frac{3}{4}$ " proceeded to reseed them again this past year with Bluegrass.

This same paradox exhibited itself on tees where 10 clubs with major proportions of Bluegrass have cutting heights of $\frac{1}{2}$ " to $\frac{3}{4}$ ".

Equally wide variation in fertilizing procedures, use of fungicides, and watering principles are wide spread in our area.

There are encouraging signs, however; 30 of the 40 clubs have developed grass nurseries, averaging 15,000 square feet. 32 Greens superintendents

attended meetings of their association and other turf conferences and 25 Clubs avail themselves of the USGA Green Section Visiting Service.

Seeing a scientific approach to grass growing problems begin to creep into maintenance procedures throughout the country, appeals to a professional man such as myself. I hope that more

clubs, through their greens superintendents, avail themselves of this truly exhilarating experience.

Distributing information on how to avoid compaction with new green and tee construction is an example of the splendid work that Dr. Marvin Ferguson and his group have done and are doing to help us help ourselves.

How Much Did You Put On?

By **DR. MARVIN H. FERGUSON**

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The Green Section agronomist visiting with a golf course superintendent asked, "How much fungicide did you put on this green?" The answer came immediately, "Two ounces per 1000 square feet." The agronomist expressed surprise because the fungicide in question is normally used at lighter rates and the amount mentioned would almost surely have produced burn. The superintendent, however, could not be shaken. He had measured the material accurately, he had applied it carefully, he had not watered it afterward. The agronomist had almost decided that there could have been no mistake when he asked the question, "How much area is in this putting green?" The answer was, "I don't know." Obviously, careful measurement and careful application are wasted if the size of the area is unknown.

If he is to know "how much was put on," he must measure the material to be applied, measure the area to be treated, and then treat the "measured area" with the "measured material."

Measure Material to Be Applied

The sellers of golf course supplies are doing a good job of packaging materials in convenient sizes for use without measuring; however, some materials must be measured. The first rule is to use standard measurements. For solids, such as powdered or crystalline materials, use ounces and pounds. For liquids use liquid ounces, pints,

quarts and gallons.

The cost of graduates and scales is not prohibitive. These enable the use of measurements and quantities as stated by the manufacturer. When Coke bottles, bar glasses, beer cans or other such containers are used, a chance for error is permitted that is not necessary. Occasionally we are told something like this, "Well, I use a ginger ale bottle full of crabgrass control material to each tankful of water and three tankfuls on 18 greens." How many ounces in the ginger ale bottle? "About 32 ounces, but I don't fill it up completely." Are all the greens the same size? "No, there is some variation. We put a little more on the larger ones and a little less on the small ones."

It is fortunate that grasses tolerate some error and that manufacturers of turf chemicals usually allow for some deviation from their printed instructions. It is amazing that hit or miss methods do not cause more trouble than they do.

The foregoing comments should not be construed to suggest that sloppy handling of chemicals is common among golf course superintendents. The competent men are conscientious about proper measurements and they carefully control the amount of material applied.

One problem in the measurement of pesticide or fertilizer arises from using different concentrations. How much