

GROWTH OF VANDALISM PLAGUES GOLF COURSES

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Vandalism on golf courses is plaguing many clubs as their maintenance costs continue to increase. Repairing and cleaning up damage done by trespassers often require unexpected expenditures and, consequently, some constructive projects suffer.

In a recent survey, the USGA found that vandalism is a great concern throughout the country.

How costly vandalism can be is shown by the following records supplied by the Atlanta Athletic Club for its East Lake Courses, Atlanta, Ga.

APRIL, 1962

4- 2—Two hoses, 9 tee markers, 1 bench	\$ 44.50
4- 3—Three flagsticks, 4 tee plates	30.00
4- 6—One flagstick	9.25
4-10—One flagstick, 7 tee plates	27.25
4-11—One flagstick, 1 tee plate	10.75
4-16—Eight flagsticks, 2 ball-washers	115.50
4-23—One sprinkler, 50 feet of hose	30.00
4-29—One flagstick	9.25
	\$277.00

MAY, 1962

5- 4—Two hoses, three sprinklers	\$ 79.00
5-16—Two hoses, 1 sprinkler, 2 flagsticks	61.50
5-17—One ball-washer	25.75
5-26—Three flagsticks, 2 hoses, 4 tee plates	58.75
5-31—Four tee plates	6.00
	\$231.00

JUNE, 1962

6- 5—Three flagsticks	\$ 27.75
6- 7—Four flagsticks	37.00
6-16—Eight flagsticks, 4 ball-washers	176.50
6-19—One flagstick	9.25
6-28—Three flagsticks, 4 tee plates	30.00
	\$280.50

JULY, 1962

7- 3—Three flagsticks, 4 tee plates	\$ 30.00
7-11—Five hoses	62.50
7-19—Six flagsticks	55.25
7-21—One bench, 1 sprinkler, 3 tee plates	28.50
7-31—One flagstick	9.25
	\$185.50

These thefts totaled \$974.00 in the four months. The Club in the past has employed guards, and in the near future contemplates erecting a steel fence.

Easy access and interesting challenges to the vandals often prompt their actions. Roy Herrick, Chairman of the Green Committee, Hillcrest Country Club, Boise, Idaho, says: "Un-

fortunately we have a large canal flow-through our course and this means a lot of tee markers and flagsticks find their way into the canal. We have an electric escalator or car mounted on rails and it has been damaged several times, once to the extent of damaging a hoist motor so it had to be rewound."

To combat vandalism the Club has posted signs offering \$100 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of anyone damaging club property, but Mr. Herrick says it has not brought results.

Putting Greens Suffer

Most of the real damage occurs on putting greens and generally is of three types: automobiles or other vehicles driven over greens or sharply turned on them; spilling or spreading of a foreign substance (usually gasoline) over greens; digging of the turf with flagsticks, shovels or other object.

About a year ago a club on the west coast experienced several weeks of intensified vandalism on greens. The damage was caused by motorcycles; turf was thrown in every direction, and it was a major sodding operation to repair them. A special policeman was hired; he finally caught two young men, one a son of a club member.

A dog was caught burying a bone in a green in Asheville, N. C. The dog was tied to a tree and the owner was shown the evidence early the next morning. The dog has not been seen on the course since.

Perhaps the most unique damage to putting greens in the west, reports William H. Bengeyfield, Western Director of the USGA Green Section, is at the Cypress Point Club, Monterey, Calif. The deer population seems to



Typical of damage inflicted upon putting greens

delight in continually prancing across fairways and greens. However, the deer are such a joy to the membership that turf seems to be a small price to pay for their presence.

In 1957 there was a report of damage in the excess of \$20,000 to greens at a club in the east. Greens had been poisoned with a mixture of sodium arsenite and calcium phosphide. Only recently a club in North Carolina reported damage of approximately \$10,000 to its greens when vandals drove golf carts on nine of the 18 greens, ripping up the sod.

Texas has a unique problem. Some smaller clubs in central and south Texas not blessed with much moisture are confined to watering just tees and greens. After nightfall armadillos sometimes partake of a feast on young grass roots and worms in the tees and greens that have had water applied. One armadillo can make a green look like it has been plowed. The situation was so bad recently that teen-age boys were sent out at night with flashlights and shotguns to keep the mammals away.

The Bellevue Country Club, Syracuse, N. Y., has had a problem which appears, on the surface, not to be unique but it was the only reply of its kind received in the survey. It seems that during the early evenings, neighborhood golfers were regularly playing and practicing on the course far away from the clubhouse. The damage was becoming so great that the Club was forced to hire a uniformed police officer to patrol the grounds after 6 p.m. The Club says this has cut damage to a minimum but the hiring of a guard is expensive.

Many other courses employ regular patrolmen or have someone on occasional patrol at night.

The celebration of holidays prompts abnormal outbreaks of destruction. The exploding of firecrackers in ball washers and putting cups does extensive damage. This was reported by many clubs in all sections of the country.

Damage has offered a serious problem to the White Bear Yacht Club, White Beach Lake, Minn. Professional

Len Mattson lists the following occurrences over the last four months: two dozen flagsticks stolen or broken; a dozen tee markers stolen; one ball washer anchored in concrete dug up and taken; a rain shelter set afire and almost demolished; greens mutilated; sand put into gas tanks and crankcases of two tractors. The worst damage, however, has been done to golf carts—four of them were smashed against one another. Mr. Mattson reveals that one of the maintenance crew has now been deputized and sleeps in the house where golf carts are parked. He adds, "I believe if vandals were caught and prosecuted and the case well publicized in any given area, it would do more to stop this than anything."

Golf carts have been targets of many vandals. In Phoenix, Ariz., carts were taken to the top of a nearby mountain, accelerators were depressed and the carts allowed to crash in a heap at the bottom. The boys responsible were caught.

The enterprises of golf course trespassers knows no bounds. Last year at a mid-western course vandals filled a putting cut with gasoline and allowed the gasoline to run from the cup to puddle in a low area on the green. A fuse arrangement was attached to the gasoline and ignited. It exploded with frightening results. The culprits, apprehended later, were fined \$900.

The USGA survey leads to a conclusion that most of the damage apparently is inflicted by youngsters—one correspondent pinned it down to ages 12 through 15. However, boys as a group are not solely responsible. On one course an enterprising man took about 1,000 square feet of sod from a course to use in his own yard. Adults rode horses across greens at another course. Others were apprehended after breaking and entering and stealing from clubs.

Recently the Los Angeles Country Club has become concerned over van-

dalism. The most serious is the turning on of water hoses and washing sand out of bunkers.

The proximity of main roads to courses gives opportunity to those who are bent on destruction. Fircrest Golf Club in Tacoma, Wash., recently erected a cyclone fence around the entire perimeter at a cost exceeding \$23,000.

There is no sure solution. Several clubs with fences reported damages. In the midwest and northwest, winter and Christmas season often prompt theft of trees from fenced courses.

What is being done about vandalism and what methods serve best as deterrents?

In Birmingham, Ala., club officials occasionally suggest to parent-members that their children be taught to protect club properties. They are tolerant with neighboring non-member children by permitting them to fish early in the mornings in the several course lakes. The children have been told they should leave the course when golfers come in view. The lack of vandalism points to the success of this type program.

Palma Ceia Golf Club, Tampa, Fla., was bothered by young trespassers several years ago, but club officials got together with school athletic departments and now the club allows school golf teams to use the course. The result has been surprisingly good.

James B. Moncrief, Agronomist, USGA Green Section in Athens, Ga., suggests fences but admits cost is prohibitive to some courses. He says the use of *Pyracantha*, where adapted as border plants, will do wonders. These plants produce beautiful berries for appearance but also have very sharp thorns. If small plants are placed at 2-to-3 feet intervals they soon will form a continuous line of shrubs.