

NEWSLETTER

Golf Course Superintendents Association

OF NEW ENGLAND, INC.

AUGUST 1974



Sponsors and administrators of the Lawrence S. Dickinson Scholarship Fund — Awarded yearly to deserving Turf Management Students.

What Degree of Difficulty

Country club golfers had themselves an unusual look at the professional tour several weeks ago when the scores at the United States Open strangely resembled those of a local kickers handicap tournament. For some, it was a moment of triumph. For others, it was a moment of sympathy.

The site was the West Course of the Winged Foot Golf Club, a hellish spread of tightly cut fairways, tangle-foot grown rough and guillotine-shaved greens. Ted Horton is the Winged Foot superintendent. He did his job as directed by the United States Golf Association which operates the game's most prestigious event. That group wanted a tough layout and Horton gave it to them. The weather also cooperated. There wasn't a trace of rain or breath of wind until the fourth and final day of play.

Many visitors thought the course a fair test. There were many remarks heard through the galleries. "That's the way golf was intended to be played and that's the way it should be at every tournament". One wag demanded in a stage whisper "It's about time these pros get to see a golf course the way we see it. Why should they be set up in a shooting gallery every week and put those low 60 scores on the board?"

This is where there seems to be division of the country club set. The two sides are easily recognizable. On the one hand are those who discovered special delight in seeing the pros spray and pray. These are the members who are all for making their course a respected field of battle. On the other hand are those who sympathized with the pros at Winged Foot. They carry the same message back to the home club. They are all for making the game more enjoyable by inviting lower scores.

There is a certain amount of pride involved in the outlook of the superintendent in this matter. Most superintendents view their courses as mirrors of their version of the ideal layout. And most prefer to make their course something more than a pitch and putt venture...although the final decision on degree of difficulty is left in the hands of the membership.

The showcase set of country clubbers is truly in the camp of the tough-guy layouts. There is a certain distinction between the courses that are considered for championship events and those clinging to the theory that a happy member is a low-scoring member. The tournament courses somehow earn public acclaim by their association with important competitions. In some circles this is viewed as the best type of publicity.

There have been offered alternatives for golfers who are dead set against putting teeth into their member courses. Most of the toughening up comes in the form of narrowing the fairways and penalizing the player in length of rough cut according to the

accuracy of the shot. There doesn't seem to be anything wrong with this method when green committees take into consideration the mediocre and high handicap players by installing a fourth level of teeing ground to go along with the ladies, regular and championship areas.

The four-tee system appears to be the compromising move in an argument currently raging in many clubs. In this solution, the golf course is at the mercy of the player's objectives...ego could be another word for it. If the player is of a mind to conquer the course completely, all he need do is move back to the championship tees. If he is not interested in total submission, he can trot ahead to whatever set of tees needed to keep him from turning the round into an interminable struggle.

One of the no-nos of the superintendent in the matter, however, is the attempt to change the natural beauty of a course in order to make the 18-hole trip around it easier. Filling in of brooks, eliminating sand traps, moving tees so as to take water hazards out of the line of play. All of these have to be considered tampering of the lowest order.

Degree of difficulty...what should it be? The answer: The course should be able to be played as difficult as the individual player wishes. The four-tee system provides the options. And in the end, everyone will be happy

Gerry Finn

Next Meeting...

AUGUST 5, 1974

**FERCROFT
COUNTRY CLUB**

Director's Meeting 10:30
Regular Meeting 11:00
Buffet after golf

Directions - Route 128 North to Route 1.
Go North to Route 1 and 95 intersection.
Follow Route 1 for 100 yards then take
left at sign for Ferncroft Village.

NOTE -

Our 50th Anniversary Party will be at the Lantana Inn, in Randolph, Mass. on Friday, Nov. 1, 1974. Details will be printed at a later date.

Golf Course Superintendents Association

In The Year 2000

Ready to let your imagination run away with you?

All right, then, switch your life to the year 2000 and let that imagination work some wonders.

You see yourself on the golf course. If you are a player, you are about to begin another round. The tramline is ready for your departure on an 18-hole tour. If everything is in working order, it will take you exactly one hour and 16 minutes to play your round. Your projected score is 82 1/3, since you have a seven handicap and haven't played in 13 days. Because of that layoff, too, you will lose one golf ball...on the 15th hole where you'll shank your second into the water.

The predictions will be available in the pro shop. They are assembled by use of an X-198 computer. Your golf pro feeds the monster with all the information on your game. This includes the score of your most recent round, the gap between days of play, your MOM rating for the day (Mind over Matter) ratio and waiting time for the rest of your foursome.

Sounds very clinical, doesn't it? But that's the way the game could be played allowing for the projected progress of the electronic age. The tram system is feasible. Just think how it will speed up play. It runs down each hole in the middle of the rough and at a pace of movement which doesn't pose any problem for getting on and getting off.

Now, see yourself in the year 2000 as a golf course superintendent. You are another keeper of the buttons, those computer jobs of course. Because in the next 25 years or so, your work is going to resemble that of an analytical supervisor at the big programmer board down the street. Once you worked only with your hands. Now, it's all brain power...with your button-pushing fingers thrown in.

Let's see, do you need a quick syringe of the seventh green which seems to be losing its color tone lately? All right, just set the dial for a five-minute liquid message...check your radar screen to make sure no players are expected there within the next 10 minutes...and put a little more green in the green.

Hey, there's trouble over on 12. Switch on your closed circuit television set and zero in the hole. There it is...a break in the irrigation line and water's forming an instant hazard in the middle of the fairway. The solution is simple. Push the shutoff buttons halting the flow of water between the 12th tee and green. Then, dispatch the line expert to the scene. He'll toss a temporary plug on the leak so as to keep the irrigation program from bugging out. Tomorrow at 3 a.m. he can come in for permanent repairs.

Complaints are heard about the traps on the fourth hole. Someone forgot to engage the automatic raker after a shot and a depression has been sighted. There's no time to waste since a foursome is approaching their second shots and one of them could stray into the trap. Time for the master raker. In an instant it smooths all of the traps on the course through an evaporating process that is unnoticed by the naked eye.

The course has now been declared full. It's half past one in the afternoon and there are golfing groups on each of the layout's tees and greens. This calls for immediate suspension of play on the first hole. The course cannot accommodate more than 144

players at a time. You press another button which throws a red flag across the first tee. The holdup continues for at least 30 minutes in order to clear eight foursomes through the 18th green.

No other emergencies pop up during the next hour or so. This gives you a chance to refurbish equipment. All mowers are cleaned and sharpened in the time it takes to put them on the conveyer. This is a job that required four men and 120 man hours to complete many years ago. Today (2000) one man does it in 37 minutes.

Just about time to call it a day. And it's been a typical five-hour day for you and your crew (one assistant). All systems are triggered for automatic operation before you leave for home... and back to the year 1974.

O.K., you don't believe it...but the year 2000 is only one generation away. And a lot can happen in 26 years. Just you wait and see.

Gerry Finn



Congratulations to

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To be voted on at the next meeting
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Ronald Hanson
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SOUND OFF

(Time once again to put the pen in the hand of the reader, which means that Sound Off is about to unfold. This feature is your feature, the opportunity for readers to take up the cry, the cause and let 'em rip in whatever manner they choose. The Newsletter welcomes every effort and has intentions of printing all offerings sent to the Mail Bag, 290 North Road, Sudbury, Mass. 01776. There aren't any hitches. We accept them all. The only requirement tagged on is that names and addresses of contributors are necessary in order to keep an orderly flow of traffic. The Newsletter will withhold the name and address of the writer upon request. It also reserves the right to comment on all letters published.)

"I'm not a superintendent or a golf pro for that matter. I'm just a golf fan who was in the crowd last month (June) when the United States Open was held at the Winged Foot Golf Club.

"As a golfer, myself, I must say that the superintendent at Winged Foot did everything in his power to make the course as difficult as he could. The greens were slippery as an eel. The fairways were cut out of the woods and were veritable plots where double parking would be impossible.

"I can't for the life of me understand why the superintendent (whoever he may be) took it upon himself to make Winged Foot a course where it was a miracle when an even par round was shot. He must have known that he had all the weapons at his command in the slick greens and hairy pin placements to protect the course without carving the fairways as if they were supposed to serve as one-way streets...for motorcycles!

"The people responsible for such a situation obviously were trying to prove that the pros are not the big hotshots the weekly tournament scores make them out to be. It is apparent that the USGA and Winged Foot had a plan in mind and that it was simply a case of not wanting any professional to cut up a course where amateurs rule the roost."

BARRY SIMPSON
Brewster, N.Y.

The super at Winged Foot is Ted Horton. It wasn't his scheming mind that did in the pros. It was the USGA, that governing body of amateur golf which decided the U.S. Open was too holy to be shot full of holes!

"This being the time of the summer when anything can happen...and that anything usually does happen, I have to remind all golfers that their courses are at the mercy of Mother Nature.

"So far this year the conditions of most courses have been on a par with the greatest ever. This, I assume, is a combination of the mild winter and the overall turf education and application thereof of the golf course superintendent. At my course, anyway, the fruits of both situations have been to the liking of our membership.

"But I am a practical man and when I see a hot, humid day beginning to take hold of my front lawn, I can see where the golf course superintendent is more aware of the weather than I am.

"This is the time of year when there is no room for mistakes...mistakes in the management of the golf course and

the application of food and water to the grounds. This is why I'm writing. It's because I am aware of the super's plight and the possibility that the long haul of his efforts can be wiped out at the whim of an extended 10-day period of oppressive heat and humidity.

"So, I'm pulling for normal weather patterns and my superintendent. Lord knows, he has been burned many times by Mother Nature and further fried by an uninformed membership. Just in case they are not reading this, please have someone advise them. The big heat of summer is a crucial time in the lives of both the super and the golfer. Each has a lot to lose."

KENNETH GIBBONS
Washington, Mass.

The weather is a stickler in itself, Ken. But the super has to live with it. Let's hope the golfer takes a similar stand.

"I do not wish to be identified. This is the one thing I must make certain before you print this letter.

"It all has to do with the influential member at the country club who takes it rather nonchalantly that he is the one superior being around the course and what is good for him is good for the rest of the members.

"I'm talking about that well-heeled heel who thinks that he can bring about changes in the topography and other physical aspects of the course, just so that it can conform to the type of game he plays. Don't laugh. I know this happens. It has happened to me, although it was at another course where other strange developments occurred.

"Well, this bird is really a man to be studied...for mental problems and other defects. He came to our club as a member who just moved to town. The only thing was that no one knew that he was planning on taking over the golf committee and eventually making changes that would suit his game.

"For a while he was a real charmer...with me and the rest of my crew. He seemed honest enough and deeply interested in the way the superintendent had to operate in order to give members a well-conditioned course. Then, it happened.

"All of a sudden he became the green chairman. And all of a sudden he started to propose certain physical changes on the course that would alter the overall look of things. He started slowly and he picked up the tempo once he found that no one was interested in stopping him. At one point he had me clear out a row of trees on the fairway because his slice didn't conform to that arrangement. Finally, I got sick and tired of his meddling and resigned.

"Just thought I'd mention this as a warning to my fellow supers. Beware of the meddler, guys. He is no good and he brings nothing good to your golf course. How glad I am that I changed jobs and how sorry I am for the man who took my place."

NAME WITHHELD
Club Withheld

The world is full of meddlers. Too bad they can't be called for interference and penalized 15 years!

(That puts the cap on the bottle. Keep those cards and letters coming. This is your column. You make it what it is.)

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