



MARCH 1977

*Golf Course Superintendents Association*  
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## The Educational Explosion

Certainly, members of the New England wing of the Golf Course Superintendents of America aren't lacking for want of educational outlets during March. No sooner will Joe Troll's three-day Massachusetts Turf Conference wrap up before the Massachusetts Golf Association puts its one-day Spring Conference out there for inspection and indulgence.

The Massachusetts Turf affair is going into the larger and more practical Springfield Civic Center, March 2-3-4. The following day the MGA will have its show at the Marriott in Newton.

Dr. Troll thinks he has the roots for the biggest and best of his annual presentations. He will have 22 speakers in all with a new twist coming on banquet night when a former golf course superintendent - Andrew Bertoni - tops the evening as the entertainment feature.

There is room for 150 exhibit booths at the spacious Springfield Civic Center. At press time, Dr. Troll had 100 booths sold and hoped to round it off at 125.

"I certainly am enthused as ever going into this conference," Joe explained. "We have something for everyone, including our first woman speaker. The superintendents should be interested in her topic, too, since she will be speaking on public relations between woman golfers and the golf course super. She's Miss Kay Kennedy and she's listed out of Vero Beach, Florida."

Even though it falls along other lines, the appearance of horticultural expert Dr. Richard Baker is sure to turn some heads and grab some attention. Dr. Baker heads up the force that maintains the Arlington National Cemetery, one of the most famous of its kind.

Dr. Troll adds that another speaker might even give our own organization a spiritual lift. He's Paul Borzelli of Fidler's Elbow, New Jersey. Borzelli had a large hand in the reorganization of the New Jersey Golf Course Superintendents Association which went into a district concept a few years ago and has become all the better for it.

The MGA's lineup is just as interesting and intriguing.

Richard Haskell, executive director of the sponsoring group, says that superintendents will be most interested in two particular phases of the program. One deals with cart paths and the other with irrigation systems and water.

"We all know that golf carts are here to stay, whether we like them or not," Haskell remarks. "And with them have come cart paths which present a whole new problem in themselves. For example, how far do we go in the construction of golf paths? First of all, there is the aesthetic effect on the rest of the course. Are we content to have an asphalt jungle out there on the golf course? Then, too, there is the expense involved in building and maintaining the cart paths. We could stay on that subject for hours."

The irrigation phase of maintenance certainly is one which has caught attention and comment along the way. "Some clubs actually are finding that their water bills are going out of sight," Haskell reminds. "So, they have had to discipline the use of the irrigation system. They also must look into storage problems and other associated things that surface in trying to make the grass stay green."

Away from the immediate interest of the superintendent, the conference will touch on other subjects. Haskell calls one, "the traffic builder." He cites the attempt of golf clubs to get people to patronize them and their facilities. "There are methods in encouraging members to patronize the club," he tells. "Then, we are planning to do something with the social end of the golf club and even touch on the food operation. It is a well-rounded show all right."

So, the educational explosion is upon the New England golf course superintendent. He doesn't have to go far to take in a plethora of subject matter, all helpful in his position as an integral part of the force which brings all this recreation and competition to the member.

Gerry Finn

### University of Massachusetts Fine Turf Conference And Industrial Show

March 2-4, 1977  
Springfield Civic Center  
Springfield, Mass.

### MGA Spring Conference

March 5, 1977  
Marriott Hotel, Newton, Mass.

## Setting A Faster Pace

In the spring of our bicentennial year, or 1976 on your last season's calendar, the Massachusetts Golf Association placed a double theme on its agenda. First order of goals was to spread enough influence and example to speed up play. Secondly, the MGA set out to encourage a reduction in golf course maintenance.

MGA Executive Director Richard Haskell was asked to comment on the results of this two-pronged drive. And, if anything, the reply was as expected. Generally, the MGA noticed an improvement in the pace of the golfer, and, likewise, it was discovered that golf clubs were becoming aware of the flexibility required in making budgets work.

"We took a 'do as I do, not do as I say' approach in trying to promote speedier play on the golf courses," Haskell reported. "The obvious method was to start improving our own house. So, we made it a point to emphasize the pace of play in our own tournaments. For the most part, I would say we accomplished something along faster-play lines. However, this is something that will take a long time in effecting."

Haskell makes it plain that the MGA is not about to become a dictatorial power and make demands on golf clubs. "We realize that a private club or public course can do as they please as far as determining how fast or slow they'll play," Haskell explained. "After all, it's the club's own business as to what it will and wants to do in speeding up play. There are clubs that are perfectly satisfied to have members take up to five or more hours to play a round of golf. If that is all right with them, who are we to try and change their ways?"

There was an overall speed-up mood on the private club and public course level, according to the MGA. "What we did was to make clubs and courses aware of the problem," Haskell continued. "Just making them conscious of the fact was enough to notice a slight pick-up of the playing pace. Sometimes mere suggestion makes people move."

The MGA executive director also had an interesting comment on the observation of the golf pace problem. "Remember," he cautioned, "for the most part, golf pace is like 5 o'clock traffic. You don't notice the slow pace or, rather, there is hardly reason to notice it during the week because the rush hours occur on Saturday and Sunday when the courses are crowded. Of course, tournament play anytime can be a problem as far as getting the players over the course in a reasonable amount of time."

Yet, Haskell added that a recent MGA survey of golf club presidents revealed that slow play was listed 50 percent of the time as one of the things they were concerned with. Therefore, it will continue to be one of the MGA's objectives for the coming season. "There are a number of factors influencing the pace of play," Haskell remarked. "And one of them is the upswing of senior golf. Now, I don't mean to say that the seniors are the reason for slow play. But, they are part of the overall picture, one that can improve much more in 1977."

The maintenance situation is still another avenue on which the MGA travels lightly. Again, it has no intention of setting up a standard of fiscal outlay for the average golf club or public course. And it repeats that a golf club's budget is its own business.

"We just hope the clubs are fiscally aware of the dangers evident in a wildfire spending spree in order to upgrade services," Haskell mentioned. "Although we consider service to be

an important aspect of golf club living, we don't think it should be exploited to the point where it might put you out of business."

The reduced maintenance theme has been a matter of individual club involvement. Some have decided to cut back on fine preparation of the playing area and saved money in the process. But others have not seen fit to make any appreciable change. The MGA's opinion on the maintenance schedule and program is one of practicality. "We think more emphasis should be placed on the condition of the course than on the beautification of it," Haskell concluded. "But, again, it's up to the individual club. And it always will be that way."

Gerry Finn



## 1977 Golf Schedule

- April 4 Eastward Ho, Brian Cowan CGCS, Superintendent
- May 10 Woonsocket Country Club, George Marchedo, Superintendent
- June 13 Franklin Country Club, Gary Luccini, Superintendent
- July The Country Club, Pete Coste CGCS, Superintendent
- Aug. 8 Halifax Country Club, Frank Murphy, Superintendent
- Sept. 26 Hampden Country Club, Robert Johnston, Superintendent
- Oct. Brae Burn Country Club, Robert Grant CGCS, Superintendent
- Nov. 1 Hopedale Country Club, Ken Mooradian, Superintendent.

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# Course Conditioning For A USGA Championship

Much has been written and/or anticipated about course conditioning for a USGA Championship. Course conditioning is the prime concern of the Green Section's eight agronomists who cover the entire country and work with golf clubs and all aspects of fine turfgrass management. When a course is selected for a USGA event, the Green Section Regional Director in that area is immediately notified. This normally is two years in advance of the tournament date. From that time on, visits are arranged with the Tournament Chairman, the Chairman of the Green Committee, and the Golf Course Superintendent. During the course of the two years, several on the site visits are made and close contact is kept with the course superintendent by phone or by mail in order to devise the very best program possible for the National Championship for that specific course.

Every visit to a golf course is a stimulating experience. It is a study in techniques and management that are intricate and exacting and no two superintendents' programs are exactly alike. Therefore, it is a very delicate thing to make recommendations of any kind without considering the long term effects on the total program, on the course and upon the grasses involved. Most people know generally what the requirements for tournament play involve - close-cropped grasses throughout except in non-target areas; greens that are fast and firm, meticulously groomed tees and fairways. Before making any recommendations, however, a thorough study of the course is first made. This includes a thorough discussion with the superintendent about all conditions observed during inspection of the course and his total management program. Once this is completed, then recommendations are discussed and the championship direction is decided upon with all agronomic considerations involved. After all, when the tournament is over, the course should be returned to the membership in as good or in better condition than it was before the championship was scheduled. Please note: THE GREEN SECTION AGRONOMISTS MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS, they don't dictate the terms of management changes! For example, "Do you think you could safely condition greens to reduce the height of cut 1/32 to the area of 5/32 inch"? "Would you double-cut greens beginning with the practice round and throughout the tournament"? "Could you

reduce the height of cut on fairways 1/8 to 1/4 inch during the entire competition"? "Would you contour this fairway slightly"? "Would you change your fertilizer program or water management program to insure firmer and tighter playing conditions"? It is a "give and take" process to assure that nothing is done that will cause the slightest turf injury.

Most courses today are beautifully groomed so the changes involved are very slight and subtle differences from the norm. Surprisingly, many of the changes are retained because once a championship is played on a course, golfers remember every stroke and want to test their skills against the performance of favorite contestants. "Let me see now, Arnie drove the ball here. . . hah! I'm only 10 yards behind him . . . not bad for a once a week golfer, eh?" That drive is conversational fodder for father for a long time thereafter! Of course, no mention is made that "Pops" played the white tees!

This article is designed to let you know what to expect should your club be selected to entertain a USGA Championship. It's a fun and learning experience for everyone involved. We of the Green Section staff always look forward to the challenge with anticipation, to the pleasure of working out intricate management problems on the site with the golf course superintendent, and to making friends with new people in this great game of golf.

Alexander M. Radko  
National Director  
USGA Greens Section

## The Quantity of Roots Under Bluegrass

One who has handled sod knows that the surface area under grass is full of roots, but few know the tremendous quantities of roots produced by such a plant as Kentucky bluegrass. Howard J. Dittmer studied this matter in Iowa and published his results in the American Journal of Botany. He also determined the quantity of roots produced by rye and oats, but our interests lies in his results with Kentucky bluegrass. Dittmer took soil samples 3 inches square and 6 inches deep. The soil was carefully washed away. All roots, no matter how small, were counted and representative lots were measured for length and diameter. From these figures it was calculated that the 84,000 separate roots found represented a total length of 1,250 feet with a total root surface of 332 square inches.

Even the root hairs, the organs through which the plant absorbs water and nutrients, were counted. Kentucky bluegrass had in each soil sample an average of 51.5 millions of root hairs which, if extended in one line, would reach 32 miles, with a surface exposure of 16.9 square feet. Kentucky bluegrass had 12 times as many roots as rye, 6 times the root length and the roots had 5 times the surface area of those rye. His study showed one reason why Kentucky bluegrass is so much more effective in holding soil than rye or oats.

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CONGRATULATIONS to Phil Cassidy, retired Superintendent at Weston Golf Club for being honored a 25 year member of GCSAA.

CONGRATULATIONS to Brian Cowan, Superintendent at Eastward Ho for completing the requirements for Certification.

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# NEWSLETTER

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