

NEWSLETTER

November, 1980



Golf Course Superintendents Association
OF NEW ENGLAND, INC.

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

Summer Went on the Wagon

If you are a golf course superintendent and irrigation systems are among those items your club labels "things to install tomorrow," your summer has been a test of your ingenuity, patience...and luck.

This was not the driest golfing season on record in the Northeast. But it ranks right up there with the meanest. Across the New England area, there were stretches of rainless days that turned many a lush and lovely fairway into a slab of overcooked bacon.

For example, the month of August produced a 15-day span in which a total of .15 inches of rain fell. From the 16th day of the month to the 30th, only traces of precipitation were recorded. And that .15 inches came in one swoop, on August 31.

Superintendents, under the disadvantage of having to groom their courses without what has turned into the luxury of an irrigation system, found themselves cursing the skies and taking emergency measures to save greens and tees.

"I was out day and night with tanks, hoses and everything at my command to keep my greens cooled down," one super reported. "And I'm not talking about producing moisture just for the sake of looks. I was in a desperate position, faced with the possibility of losing everything with grass on it."

The critical burn-out months of July and August were indeed just that. July did total 2.70 inches of rainfall. However, that figure is deceiving in the fact that more than half of it came during a thunderstorm on July 29 that produced 1.38 inches. Therefore, the remaining 30 days of the month brought only a little more than one inch of rain.

Weather forecasters were especially concerned with the continuation of the drought in September. Normally, the autumn kickoff is accompanied by cool nights and humidity-short days.

"That's when I thought our course would snap back," informed another super who has to depend on Mother Nature for his main source of water. "But, instead of getting better, conditions got worse. This is the last day of the month (September) and I have never seen my fairways as brown. It's worse than that. They're parched."

According to records of local weather bureaus, September falls into a list of "the top 20" as far as instigating drought conditions. This means that the month has to go down as one of the driest since records were initiated more than 80 years ago.

In addition to being on the wagon for most of the golfing season, the summer proved to be more of a headache because of the complementing conditions it wrought. The humidity was beastly and consistent. Then, too, another danger surfaced.

"Just too many stages when the winds came out of the northwest," our plagued supers complained. "They took what moisture there was in the ground and dried it up. So, I was fighting the weather from all sides...no rain, lots of

humidity and those damn northwest winds."

Ironically, the dry summer might have been welcomed by those superintendents with irrigation systems and bountiful water supplies for employing them at their command.

"Personally, I think I can do a better job of keeping my course in good shape when we have prolonged dry conditions," one push-button rainmaker observed. "What happens in this case is that I can control the amount of moisture going to the plants."

"I fear those quick thunderstorms that drop buckets of rain, forming still water and inviting disease from the humidity. When that happens, I'm helpless. So, even though I feel sorry for those superintendents and courses that don't have irrigation systems, I do better when it doesn't rain."

The occasion of the drought through the summer months followed a pattern established last winter when the Northeast--especially New England--suffered through snowless months. That posed a danger of top soil blowing off and lengthened the turf recovery period of spring.

"We were hammered all year long as far as I'm concerned," the super praying for rain concluded. "For those of us, who couldn't control the moisture and feeding process, it was sheer hell. It has to tell my club something. Irrigation is the only way to go."

So, the superintendent had his problem this golf season. Spring was a late comer and summer lingered into fall without loosening its grip on choking conditions. As the farmer once sighed while clearing the dust from his throat, "it was so dry I had to sit on a sack of fertilizer to raise an umbrella."

GERRY FINN

Next Meeting

Monoosnock C.C.
Nov. 3, 1980

Directors Meeting	9:30 a.m.
Regular Meeting	10:00 a.m.
Lunch	11:30 a.m.
Golf	12:30 p.m.

Directions: From 128 or 495 take route 2 west to route 13. Turn right on route 13. Club is 7/10 mile on right.

Reservations for lunch: Call Leroy Allen at 342-7722 home or 537-1812 club.

Subtle and Successful

The transformation has been subtle...and it's working its way to a very successful finish.

The project is the return to the golfing challenges of yesteryear, influenced by a creative undertaking of the golf course superintendent. Slowly but surely, the summer playground of millions of low handicappers and hackers is losing its shooting gallery look and taking on the appearance of a truly sporting venture.

The Newsletter has been in the midst of a subtle undertaking of its own--polling golfers on their views of allowing the fringe grasses to remain at challenging chipping heights and closing in the fairways by extending the limits of roughs distinguishing their natural route to the green.

Most courses have turned to the sculpture technique of mowing fairways and roughs. Obviously, from an aesthetic viewpoint, the change has brought a remarkable improvement to the overall view of the golf course.

"Now, the game of golf is back to what it was intended to be," one player admitted after taking two shots to get his ball back where it belonged--in the middle of the fairway. "It's returned to a test of accuracy and skill. Bull-whipping the golf ball belongs on the driving range."

Golfers have been forced to concentrate on distance for the past 20 years because of the influx of so-called "championship" courses. These were designed strictly for those sultans of swat who could drive the ball 250 yards or more consistently. With their coming came a wave of complaints from those who were "wearing out their woods" trying to reach the green.

Therefore, golf became a sport of the bicep-equipped set and plunged the short hitters into frustrated rounds in the astronomical scoring range. However, a combination of economics and common sense is promoting some equity in scoremaking.

The revolution has even brought on signs of response from the golfing architectural wing. The trend in building courses now is to stress accuracy by offering shorter holes, smaller greens and just enough hazards to penalize the whole rather than part of it.

"I've had the most problems with that tall stuff around the greens," another golfer told. "At first, I was convinced the superintendent at our course was just being lazy and overlooking cutting the fringes down to pool table height. I was ready to blast him for it. But, after playing at other courses, I can see what it's all about. I've had to adjust but I'm beginning to enjoy this new challenge."

Actually, the new form of grooming the course down to tight proportions originated out of necessity. The superintendent had to cut back on conditioning costs and the easiest method was to alter mowing procedures. From that start, there has developed a new concept of course appreciation and playing.

"It's just common sense," one veteran golfer opined. "I had to go along with the exaggerated distances required when they built those monster courses, because I had no choice.

Now, there's more logic in the game. I feel I have a chance against a longer hitter because I'm more accurate. Therefore, at least the change has brought some competitive balance into the sport."

Of course, there are some dissenters. "I don't think you should be penalized for rolling two or three feet over the green or coming up short by having to chip out of elephant grass," one golfer grouched. "And chipping's the worst part of my game. I guess I'll just have to take a lesson...or take up tennis."

And that's where the new grooming approach stands. For the most part, golfers are coming around to accepting the change. Certainly, the superintendent has to approve of it since the time saved in less mowing allows him freedom to pursue other problems.

At any rate, the transformation eventually will produce the complete golfer and distribute the challenge of the game more judiciously. That's the way it should be, anyway.

GERRY FINN



"GOTTA CLUB THAT SWINGS WITHOUT A SLICE?"

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Evaluating Your Operation

With the passing of summer, golf course superintendents in many parts of the country have an opportunity to set back, take a deep breath and evaluate their operations. On many courses, heavy player traffic has slowed, seasonal employees have gone and budget time is approaching. It's time to take inventory.

Besides the problems of getting the course and equipment ready for winter and inventorying leftover supplies, it's also time to look back over the summer and take a mental inventory of your operation's strengths and weaknesses.

For example, what went wrong during the season? Was your course damaged by insects or disease? If so, what can be done to prevent a recurrence? Now is the time to figure out what should be done and when.

Were your crew members aerifying the course on the day of a club tournament? The slow seasons are the time to work out lines of communication to prevent such misunderstandings from happening next year.

What can be done to improve the course? Take an objective look at your irrigation system, your equipment and the design and condition of your course. Maybe this is the time to plan improvements.

While you are evaluating your performance over the last season, don't overlook the things that went especially well, either. Did you pick up any additional responsibilities this year, responsibilities you might like to continue? Did you try a new scheduling program that was effective? How can it be changed to work even better?

Which of your employees really came through for you? Did an assistant take over some of your responsibilities and run with them? Which employees are willing to put out a little extra effort? Which ones seem to have good ideas? Did one of your seasonal employees prove to be especially hard-working and reliable? If so, you will want to make arrangements to have him back next year.

Now take a look at those projects that were put off all summer. Now is the time to dust them off and get to work on them.

Here is where a good filing system comes in handy. By taking clear notes on problems and opportunities as they occur, and by adding to those notes when you evaluate your operation at the end of the season, you can develop a handy reference tool for use in the future.

Whatever your evaluation of the summer proves, it's important to reap whatever benefits you can. If everything went relatively well, it's just as vital to know why as it is to uncover the causes if there were problems. By building on the past years' achievements and avoiding its mistakes, we can face anything the future has to offer.

Credit: **FOREFRONT**



"I'VE SOLVED THE LOST BALL PROBLEM FOR ONLY \$30,000!"

Dye Your Hydraulic Oil

Over the years spillage of oil on greens from triplex mowers has been a headache to superintendents. We've read all the different methods of clean up of such spills from alcohol to detergents. It was interesting to read in the June issue of *Golf Business*, how one superintendent tackled this problem.

Gary Morgan, Superintendent at Sherwood Country Club in Titusville, Florida, with the help of his assistant Bill Sheffer, did some digging and came up with a dye that could successfully be mixed with hydraulic oil. A **crimson red** fat stain named SUDAN IV, S667 was the answer. Gary's test showed that 25 gms. of the material was a suitable amount to mix in the hydraulic system of a Toro Greensmaster III. The advantages of the stain are:

1. Operator can immediately observe spillage.
2. Stain shows up at loose fittings.

In the U.S., the SUDAN IV dye is manufactured by Fisher Scientific Company, Fairhaven, New Jersey 07410. In the Toronto area the material can be purchased from B.D.H. Chemicals, Evans Avenue, Toronto. Cost of 25 oz. of SUDAN IV, S667 is roughly \$18.

Note: The stain does not have the approval of Toro or Jacobsen yet for their warranty machines, but after 1-1/2 years of use, Gary Morgan has found it to be successful without any affect to the operation of the mower.

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