



New Jersey Golf Course Report

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The Spark

By James Smith, Sr.

The following is the complete text of Mr. Smith's speech before the 40th Anniversary Banquet of the Rutgers Turf Short Course. Its printing here cannot possibly equal the heart-felt delivery, but at least perhaps we have captured the meaning.

Gentlemen:

To meet with you tonight is indeed a pleasure. To be asked in the role of elder associate, since elders are at the present time very much in disfavor and likely to be downright boring, is distinctly flattering. I shall try not to bore you.

Ralph has asked me to give my version of what sparked the movement which resulted in the establishment of the now popular and famous New Jersey Short Courses in Turf Management. Frankly, I do not feel that any sensational specific occurrence set off the movement. True, *Poa annua* presented a periodic headache; uneducated use of nitrogen fertilizers caused job-losing calamities; epidemics of turf diseases left disasters which the greenskeepers could not explain. However, by themselves, none of these problems, nor others like them, could have opened the door which separated the research and education side of the turf world from the professional turf production and maintenance side. Believe me, this door was a massive and imposing barrier. It was oaken in its hard-headed attitudes of self-sufficiency; studded with ignorance and intolerance; triple-barred with suspicion, mutual distrust, and bitter contempt; and completely successful in preventing communication.

The key, in my opinion, which opened this door was "AWARENESS." Please let me repeat—"AWARENESS."

Golf, for years, had been a rich man's game, and clubs, all private then, had been supported by annual contributions of a few board members who claimed, in return for their contributions undisputed authority to run their clubs as they wished. This produced an autocratic atmosphere not at all conducive to progress. So long as a greens-

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WELCOME BACK! This is the scene that greeted "Red" Williams two days after his return from the National Conference. All of the maintenance equipment and the entire barn at Homestead C.C. were destroyed. It is believed the fire started by ignition of gasoline fumes.

Spring — A Time to Assess Drainage

by A. Robert Mazur, Agronomist
USGA Green Section, Eastern Region

As spring approaches, the thoughts of every superintendent turn toward the grooming of his course.

The normal situation in the Northeast during the spring is the presence of plethoric amounts of moisture from rain as well as melting snows. This situation not only slows the soil warming process, thus delaying the growth of the grass, but also prohibits normal maintenance operations. Wet soils footprint, rut and bog down equipment. This is the *visible damage*. The compaction or *invisible damage* that results has a far more detrimental and lasting effect on the turf.

In addition, we are aware of the fact that poorly drained soil promotes shallow-rooted plants, increases the incidence of disease and attributes to "scald-out" during the summer. The result is a turf that just won't stand up under stress!

Drainage can be improved by (1)

increasing the surface drainage, (2) installing tile drains or slit trenches, or (3) by modifying the physical conditions of the soil.

(1) Grass waterways and open drains are particularly effective in controlling the "runoff" or excess amounts of surface water.

(2) Tile drains can be used to intercept and eliminate problems involved with seepage or underground water. It is also often used to improve the natural line of drainage, particularly on heavy soils.

Slit trenches are made of materials that conduct water faster than surrounding soil to a lower strata in the soil profile. The importance of this type of drain is the economy and ease of installation.

(3) Modifying existing soil to correct poor soil structure and eliminate any impervious soil layers is costly and time consuming. For this reason this is only possible on limited areas of the course, such as greens and in some cases tees.

There is no better time to assess your drainage problems than in the spring when they are most evident.

THE SPARK Continued.

keeper tipped his hat to the right people and said, "Sir" and "Ma'am" in proper deference, he held his job, in spite of the condition of his course.

Greenskeepers were rugged individualists. Some were very capable; others, hopelessly inept. Some were most scrupulous in their handling of club supply buying; others were less scrupulous. I knew many of these men personally. I admired and respected them. May I say that, in a manner, as between members of a family, my affection for some was that of the love between brothers or between father and son.

The turf research world was made up of dedicated pioneers in general agronomy who were far-seeing in that they knew that advances in cultural practices in agronomy would benefit all types of recreational turf, from home lawn to the fine turf of golf, tennis, bowling, and the like. Of course, among these pioneers, there were some who had little interest in the subject. However, the Spragues, Evauls, Mussers, Graus, De Frances, Pfeiffers, and Montiths, to name a few, who were the active workers in the late twenties and early thirties, were ready to be helpful, hospitable hosts to all who wished to enter when the big door would be opened.

Changing conditions in the late twenties produced the awareness which finally unlocked the big door.

Rich autocrats were no longer willing and, in many cases, able to support their clubs. Younger, less affluent members were forcing business-like and democratic changes in club operations. Members were demanding better turf and higher standards of maintenance. The Great Depression accelerated many changes. The young, new blood was very much aware of the need of great change in the golf course business. Therefore, golf management — meaning the officers and directors — was ready to have the big door thrown open.

Greenskeepers were forced by demands of the new breed of golfer, by comparison between courses, by threats to their job security, but, most important, by their own common sense and conscience, to develop "awareness" and thus do their part to unhinge the big door.

The researchers and the educators, although somewhat ready for the turn of events, soon found a thirst for knowledge on the part of the greenskeepers with an extreme minimum of time which could be spent by them away from their courses. As a result, the Short Course was selected as the best way for greenskeepers to begin the long, arduous task of modernizing

fine turf grass culture on the golf course. In time, longer courses were given. Today, many superintendents are full-degree college graduates.

In closing, I emphasize again that awareness of needs, changes, availability of scientific help, and a new horizon launched the Short Course in Turf Management.

Thank you all for listening to an eighty-year-old associate. Little did I think forty years ago, when my son and I were struggling to get our then infant Fertl-Soil Co. under way, that, forty years later, I would have the opportunity to address such a gathering as this, particularly with two grandsons in the business — one, "Chip," in our Jersey operation at Rahway, and the other, "Dave," running the manufacturing of Fertl-Soil Top-dressing at Kennett Square, Pennsylvania.

Ralph, with all my heart, I hope that the future of the turf field will be ever upward. With dedicated men like yourself and fine men, such as constitute the N.J.G.C.S. Association, guiding the industry, the future must be good. Thank you, Ralph, for asking me here tonight.

Penny Wise — Pound Foolish

By Al Rathjens, Jr.

"Well they must be playing cards now." "What does he need that many men for now?" "I wonder if he has another job this time of year?"

Are these the thoughts that are passing through your members' minds this time of year? Granted the club member has in recent years become more aware and probably more appreciative of the duties of their golf course superintendent and crew, but I believe that they are still slightly suspicious of the economic value of maintaining this crew through the long, cold winter months.

In many cases it is only after much browbeating and salesmanship that a green chairman will allow the superintendent to maintain a crew through the winter. The dollars and cents saving between the superintendent and one man and the superintendent and four men through the winter may be quite apparent to the chairman. What may not be obvious to the club official is the long term saving to the club by maintaining the larger crew.

Most clubs provide year-round activities for the membership. The restaurant and bar are open not only in summer but also in winter; therefore walkways and driveways must be sanded and kept clear of snow. The greens crew may also be instrumental in the erection of the Christmas tree and decorations. Many clubs have squash courts and ice rinks, which are

served by the greens crew.

Tree removal, brush cleanup and tree pruning may be done in late fall and early winter. This work helps keep the course well groomed and may help to eliminate more expensive professional tree work in the future.

Liming and fertilization are two important maintenance practices which may be done by the greens crew during the winter, rather than during the busier months of the growing season.

The repair and maintenance of equipment which is done on a "bailing wire and chewing gum" basis during the summer months can be approached in the winter from the complete overhaul approach. Equipment put in tip top condition in the winter will provide trouble-free service when it is needed. This in turn will constitute less man hours lost due to equipment breakdown.

The most important value of maintaining a crew through the winter is that these men will be there in the spring. You will have a crew that knows the golf course, knows the equipment, and knows your maintenance practice. As obscure as it may seem this is the greatest saving for the club. The time lost in breaking in an inexperienced crew in the spring cannot be regained. The damage done to equipment during this time may be considerable.

The club which provides for itself a year-round greens crew also provides for itself a year-round maintenance program. A year-round maintenance program leads to a well groomed golf course.

To answer our initial query he (the Golf Course Superintendent) doesn't have another job in the winter. He's too busy.

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