UNITED STATES GOLF ASSOCIATION
GREEN SECTION EASTERN REGION

NORTHEASTERN DISTRICT
RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY

MID-ATLANTIC DISTRICT
PLANT INDUSTRY STATION
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# EASTERN TURFLETTER

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No. 1 February, 1958

## "COURSE CLOSED"

This is certainly an unwelcome sign, but one that is posted at times at golf clubs in the Northern regions. It is unwelcome because more and more golfers look to full use of club facilities during the greater part of the year — and indeed many look to golf all year round.

The Golf Course Superintendent and his Green Committee strive to accommodate their membership, but there are times when, due to conditions beyond their control, the "Course Closed" sign should be posted. There are several reasons for closing the course, and most of them relate to the putting surfaces.

It has been said that "the putting green is the orchid of the golf turf world", and rightly so, not only becuase of a similar beauty of the well kept putting surface, but also because of the tremendous amount of work involved in striving toward the goal of perfection. Once attained, it takes constant attention to retain perfection.

Play on greens at certain times in winter can cause a great deal of trouble, and can make the job of keeping perfect putting surfaces extremely more difficult. Unquestionably some of the summer troubles can be traced back to play in winter causes. First, and most important to the Superintendent and his Green Committee is the compaction of soil which results when greens are soft on top and the soil is frozen at a depth of one inch or so beneath. Structure of the soft soil is broken down, just as surely as though there were a delegation sitting on each green making "mud pies". The heavier the soil (higher the clay content), the more compact the soil becomes, and most soils in our area are heavy — but the point is that no two greens are alike and "safe" conditions on one course may not be safe for the course down the street. Second, and just as must of concern to golfers as well as those in charge of course operations, the surface becomes bumpy from play under conditions described. Finally, foot pressure on wet, soft turf may injure the plant; roots may be sheared, and the grass blades may be bruised by the abrasive action. As a result of this weakening, weeds may better gain foothold.

The natural freezing and thawing of soils is one of Nature's greatest aids to turf maintenance. When allowed to settle naturally, freezing and thawing action aerates and granulates the soil, and the turf performs better for it. However when trampled, thawed soils become more compacted, and soil compaction is one of the more serious and difficult problems of putting green soils. It is because of soil compaction problems that more aeration and top dressing now come into play so prominently. Thus it becomes evident that the costs of restoring a putting surface should be weighed against income received from play at this time.

On the other hand, there is no evidence to substantiate that play on greens when they are frozen solid has a detrimental effect on the soil. Frozen grass blades however may crack and break at this time but usually outgrow this injury.

There are two obvious courses open to the question of play in winter: (1) Provide a set of "winter" greens; (2) Leave the "Course Closed" sign in custody of the Superintendent to use when he and his Green Committee feel it should be posted. We like the term "winter" greens for, as suggested by Dr. Dawson of the St. Ives Research Station, Yorkshire, England, in his Journal of the Sports Turf Institute, "It is bad psychology to call them temporary greens".

"COURSE CLOSED" in Season

There are times too in the regular playing season when it may also be in the best interests to close the greens to play. After heavy rainfall, when greens are saturated, compaction and soil structure break-down problems described above also can occur. In addition, heavy traffic on saturated greens in growing season weakens the turf and makes it more susceptible to injury. The best examples of such injury can best be seen about the cup, where traffic is heaviest, when the green is excessively wet.

## CONFERENCE NOTES

At the National Conference in Washington, D. C., Dr. Ralph Engel reported on results of Goose grass and Poa annua Control Trials. The goosegrass control work is being done on a U.S.G.A. Green Section fellowship award and Mr. Jim Fulwider, graduate student, is doing the work under Dr. Engel's guidance.

Goosegrass Control - "Herbicide treatments for pre-emergence goosegrass control were made in 1957, on a mixed turf which was cut to 3/4 inch. Application of 60 lbs. of chlordane per acre in granular form in early June gave very good control. Arsenate of lead, sesin, and neburon showed some control. The value of treatment with the latter chemical was reduced by damage to the turf."

Poa annua Control - "After two years of screening materials at different seasons and rates, we selected sodium arsenite, maleic hydrazide, and endothol as worthy of further study. These chemicals were sprayed on test plots across a fairway of the Canoe Brook Country Club (Mr. Jack Ormond, Superintendent) through four seasons. At the close of the past season, we concluded that endothol can produce significant reduction of Poa annua in bentgrass fairways of our area. The endothol treatment as used, gave nearly 100% control of white clover. We recommend that its use be restricted to 2 or 3 applications in early spring at the rate of 1/2 lb. per acre. Those wishing to experiment with endothol should use the chemical on a limited scale and avoid treating areas that are solid Poa annua."

From the paper presented by Dr. R. B. Alderfer at the Rutgers Turf Week, we quote herewith, "A good, easily managed turf soil has to be able to do the following so far as water is concerned:

(1) Take it in rapidly enough to prevent run-off and surface ponding.

(2) Distribute it rapidly to the capillary or water-holding pores.

(3) Get rid of any excess water which the capillary pores cannot hold by draining it rapidly out of the soil profile.

(4) Hold enough easily available water in the soil to supply plants with that needed for satisfactory growth for as long a time as possible.

(5) Remain properly aerated regardless of the amount of water the soil happens to have in it."

The water-holding and air pore spaces that Dr. Alderfer emphasizes here are those that are lost or destroyed when greens are trampled under "Course Closed" conditions in our opening article.

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Could This Have Been Where It All Originated?

"GOLF spelled backwards spells FLOG -- flog the ball all you want, my dear man, but please do spare the TURF."

(From the October, 1924 issue of the Bulletin of the Green Section of the U. S. G. A.).

# Eastern Turfletter

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