

NEWSLETTER

Golf Course Superintendents Association

OF NEW ENGLAND, INC.

September, 1975



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

Hot's Not the Word for it

Boy, was it hot...and wet...and humid.

That's how the testy July-August period launched its annual attack on the golf course superintendent. Everyone agrees it left its mark.

"A very bad year, indeed," commented Dr. Joseph Troll of the University of Massachusetts. "I would classify it among our worst ever. Excessive rain made for a short root system in the plants and the heat and humidity compounded the problem by producing rotting and every other kind of disease you can think of."

A summary of the first 40 days of July and August points up the validity of Dr. Troll's views. All figures showed spirals toward and beyond normal numbers.

For example, in Western Massachusetts and the Longmeadow Country Club station the total precipitation for July was 6.80 inches. The average daily low temperature was 63 degrees. The average high was a choking 87. And the day to day humidity checked out at 78 percent.

Twenty of July's 31 days fell in the "extremely humid" category. What's more the incidence of heavy rain invariably was followed by long, scorching and humid weather. For example, in the July 13-14 log, it shows a rainfall of three inches. Following this was a stretch of four days during which the temperature hovered around 90 and the humidity averaged over 85 percent. That could have been a killer for most courses.

On top of this, a rainfall of 1.07 inches occurred on July 21. Three consecutive days of 90-degree heat and high 70-percent humidity chased after plant life again to make for a 12-day span in which heavy rains were followed by high humidity, a deadly combination for any kind of growth.

"The unusual incidence of the three factors--rain, heat and humidity--gave the superintendent little chance to come out of it without suffering damage," Dr. Troll explained. "In low areas, he suffered wet wilt because of the rain and humidity. In high areas, he suffered dry wilt because of the heat and humidity. The situation was just awful."

Dr. Troll repeated his assessment of the superintendent's plight in summer. "As far as I'm concerned, the superintendent throws out his aim at a specific target," he told. "He shoots to survive July and August. That's what the whole game is about. Those two months can make or break a maintenance program. The super looks forward to combatting it when he heats up for battle in the spring and then cleans up the damage it leaves when he licks his wounds in the fall."

A check around the Northeast proved that most courses (superintendents and members, alike) were relieved if their layouts managed to survive without too much damage to the greens. "That's the only area where the superintendent had a chance," Dr. Troll remarked. "At my own club in Amherst, we were hoping to save the greens and as many tees as possible. The fairways were at the mercy of the weather conditions and the plants' reaction to it."

The early days of August didn't promise much relief from the assault July mounted. For five of the first nine days of the month,

the humidity averaged over 90 percent. And, once again, the humidity seemed to get a cue from the rain gods and rise to his highest potency just after a healthy downpour. Temperatures in the August early times didn't take any tumble, either. At the Longmeadow checkpoint, a low of 73 was recorded on Aug. 8. However a high of 101 on Aug. 2 was sandwiched between highs of 96 on the first and 97 on the third. Most depressing.

"It just seemed to be a period when the weather went 'wet-hot-wet-hot' for the longest of spells," Dr. Troll continued. "I can't think of any worse possible weather pattern. I know of one local course where one green was under water for two days."

The answer, Dr. Troll? "Just keep on working to repair the hurt and hope for results," he concluded. "We may have to apply an old baseball saw to this season. Just try to survive from here on in and 'wait till next year.' Things can't get any worse...I hope."

Gerry Finn

Next Meeting

Tedesco C.C.

September 4, 1975

Host - Lenny Gregory
Event - Super - Celebrity
Times - Buffet 11:30 - 1:30
Golf - 11:30 on
Dinner - 7:00 p.m.

Directions - From route 128 take route 114 follow to Salem. Pick up route 1A from Salem and follow to Swampscott line. Course is on left. Tedesco St.

Just for the Sake of 'Gimmes'

Tom Schofield relayed a rather interesting quote the other week.

It came from the professional lips of touring star, Dave Stockton, who dropped this beauty shortly after the conclusion of the United States Open at Medinah, Ill.: "Four of the greens, cut too low for the Open at the Medinah Country Club, have been ruined."

This causes Schofield, and surely other golf course superintendents, to be wary of hosting tournaments where the course yields to the demands of the players for impeccable playing conditions under the threat of having severe damage result from concession.

The question arises: "When a tournament is scheduled at a course, what course should the adjustment follow.....should the players adjust to the course or should the course adjust to the players?"

Obviously, the latter was the situation at Medinah. Its weather barrage prior to the U.S. Open followed the same lines as those outlined in this month's other Newsletter piece. The course had been deluged by rain for several days before play and oppressive heat followed during the actual tournament battle. Even without what had to be senseless low-cutting of the greens, the course was prone to damage on the basis of weather conditions alone. With the traffic of a tournament added, the situation was tense.

In the June issue of the Newsletter, the New England PGA forwarded to supers its own guidelines for preparing and marking a golf course for tournament play. Some of the preparational comments should have stirred the superintendent's populace to reaction, i.e.....

"General width of fairway 30 yards, more or less depending upon difficulty of hole. Fairways 1/2 inch cut, greens, 3/16 inch cut, rough 1 1/2 inch cut for six feet, three foot cut beyond. Recommended lip on bunkers three inches."

For some reason, professional golfers come to expect the best in playing conditions. . . whether conditions for effecting such utopia are favorable or not. And, in many cases, the course condition becomes a crutch for him in the limp from scoring tent to car and a miss of the cut.

The Medinah mess should serve as warning to members to green and golf committees who front the course when tournaments are scheduled at their clubs. More than likely, it was the decision of someone other than the Medinah superintendent to turn the greens there into pool tables. It must be assumed that the

sponsoring USGA had complete control over green cuts and other conditional work, with the control extended them when the contract was signed to stage the Open at Medinah.

There have been examples--right here in New England--where members were left a veritable no-man's land for a golf course when the pros had left their shots and divots behind them. The scars take a long time to heal, in many instances carrying over to refurbishing in the fall when the weather is more cooperative for such things.

The responsibility for maintaining adequate playing conditions on a course lies with the superintendent. However, that responsibility apparently is flexible when it comes to making important decisions affecting the life of those playing conditions. It is not right to expect the superintendent "to make repairs after the tournament is over and bring the course back to life again." Such a demand is unfair and, in fact, ludicrous.

We all realize that the pros should be exposed to the best possible playing conditions. . . but so, too, should the club's members. And when the cut of a green or fairway jeopardizes the future of the course for its members, a wholesale re-evaluation of the tournament-preparation process appears mandatory.

Just for the sake of a few "gimme" puts the life expectancy of the golf course's top playing conditions in danger. Just 1/32nd difference in the cut of a green can cause havoc. Is it worth it in the long run?

Gerry Finn

Congratulations to

Phil Dirico
Steve Tricca
Voted in as Associate members

Last Months Tournament Results

Blind draw team net

Net 53

Dave Barber
Pierre Costa
Don Hearn
Bob Johnson

Net 55

Bruce Petelli
Lenny Blodgett
Bert Frederick
Eric Brown

Net 56

Ron Hansen
Steve Tricca
Phil Cassidy
Julius Akston

Net 57

Ron Kirkman
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Sound Off

(Here we go again. Sound Off's coming at you. It's that little feature which is offered for members, friends and readers of the Newsletter to open their minds and fill the rest of us with comments, criticisms and maybe even an occasional sprig of praise. All contributors to this section are asked to make their letters as short, concise as possible and include names and addresses. The Newsletter respects the right of identity and will withhold names, addresses or whatever upon request of the sender. All communication should be directed to Newsletter Mail Bag, 290 North Street, Sudbury, Mass. 01776. The Newsletter reserves the right to comment on all letters.)

"I was very interested in a letter you published last month regarding the strange habits of golf course ducks. It seems that animals have become a part of the golf kingdom of late. At any rate, I seem to notice more ducks and the like finding homes on courses all over the country.

"We had an experience here with a duck which I think warrants a comment or two.

"It seems one of our prize feathered friends--a white duck--lost all mobility and appeared to be reaching for the great beyond. It was suggested that it be put away in a merciful approach. However, one of the course workers intervened and took it upon himself to bring the 'dying' duck to a veterinarian.

"Happy to say, the malady was not serious. The vet said our white duck probably had eaten something that didn't agree with him-her. It lost a lot of weight but is well on the way to recovery. "He's alert, but depressed," was the vet's report.

"I was wondering if any of you people have had similar experiences with ducks and if you've ever thought of contacting Blue Cross to see how much a premium on a duck would cost."

JOSEPH MADDEN
Stockbridge, Mass.

Good show, Joe. Ducks have become the little darlings of the fairways. Thank heavens, you didn't bring your ailing one to a "quack."

"The continuing practice of vandals stealing green flagsticks seems appalling to me in the light that I really don't know what a person would do with one unless he owned his own golf course.

"During a recent tournament at our club, I noticed that the course superintendent wasted no time getting the flagsticks back to safety. As soon as the last foursome had left the first green, he picked up the flag. He went along scooping them up on succeeding holes.

"I was wondering if any of your readers ever have seen a flagstick performing a function away from the golf course. There can't be any use for them other than what was originally intended."

VINCE JONES
East Longmeadow, Mass.

That's a pretty good query, Vince. We have scoured around looking for missing flagsticks but to no avail. The closest thing to one performing a function off the course was an old ski pole which was being used as a tie for tomato plants.

"In a recent article, you talked about the negligence of certain golfers who fail to fix ball marks on the greens and even go to the damaging extent of using regular greens as targets for approach shots during their practice sessions.

"To follow up on the awareness of this condition, I would like to make the suggestion that most of the ball marks on greens are put there by the low handicap golfer who supposedly 'knows all' about the game.

"My observations lead me to believe that the all-knowing low-handicapper needs lessons in golf etiquette and plain manners (which would include respect of public and private property.)

"It seems that the only time this par-busting culprit ever takes it upon himself to repair a mark is when that mark is in his putting line. On situations where they don't affect his try for a bird, he simply ignores them.

"Think about this for a moment. You know that most hackers don't have the ability to hit a golf ball the right way in the first place. They either run the ball onto the green with a half-skulled shot or have it reach there under other miraculous circumstances. On the other hand, the low-handicapper puts 'bite' on his approach shots and they do just that. . . taking a bite out of the green.

"The same holds true for divots in the fairway. The only time a hacker makes them is when he hits a mile behind the ball, whereas the low-handicapper is hitting 'down and through' all the time."

CHARLES GIBBONS
Worcester, Mass.

We don't wish to enter what appears to be a budding controversy, Charley. We're not concerned with who makes the marks. . . only with those who fail to repair them.

"I would like to report to those, who may have missed it, that we had another enjoyable summer field trip here in Western Massachusetts.

"As usual, the picnic setting, appealed to all. This year attendance hit 200 which is my way of thinking that people would like more of same.

"Our program was well-received, with the formal presentations and informal discussion period after lunch keeping everyone well-convinced the field trip idea is a good one.

"Of course the natural beauty of Mt. Sugarloaf added to the affair. We hope to keep the field trip on an annual basis and appreciate the support of those who have attended."

JOSEPH TROLL
Amherst, Mass.

Maybe next year you'll need the whole mountain to accommodate the crowds, Joe. Any educational endeavor deserves a pat on the back.

(That winds us down to the end of another rap session with the reader. Like always, it was interesting. Keep those cards and letters coming. This is your space in your Newsletter.)

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