



# THE NEWSLETTER

Golf Course Superintendents

Association OF NEW ENGLAND, INC.

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

July 1988

## —NEXT MEETING—

Monday, July 18, 1988  
Gardner Muni G.C.

9:30 a.m. Directors meeting  
10:30 a.m. Regular meeting  
11:00 a.m. Lunch  
12:00 noon Golf; shotgun

Reservations must be made  
through pro shop no later than  
7 p.m. Sunday, July 17.

(617) 632-9703 (area code changes to  
508, July 16)

Host superintendent, Mike Hermanson.

Mike is a 1970 graduate of Stockbridge  
and he has been superintendent of  
Gardner since 1972.

Directions: From Boston, Rte. 2 west -  
exit at first Gardner exit. Sign will read  
North Gardner, Winchendon. Follow 140  
North Winchendon approximately 2 1/2  
miles. Golf course will be on your left.  
From western Mass. take 2 east and take  
second Gardner exit which reads North  
Gardner, Winchendon and follow above  
directions.

## Divot Drift

Various golf publications and newspapers criticized golf fans at The Country Club for unruly behavior. Most obvious was the experience of Curtis Strange on the 18th fairway on Sunday. Rather than cast the evil eye on golf fans who endured traffic jams, a 25-year wait for THE major golf championship, traffic tie ups, lottery-like odds in the US Open ticket raffle, traffic delays, mile long lines at concession tents during Monday's practice round, traffic overloads and close to

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## Open Field: "Our Compliments to the Super"



A funny thing happened on the way out of the U.S. Open this year.

No one complained about the course.

Which is one way of saying the 1988 version of the most important golf championship in the world made history. Well, when was the last time an Open field left town without at least one player giving the layout a cross-eyed look as he headed for the next tournament?

Obviously, those assigned the responsibility of turning over a testing but fair and finely groomed golf course to the USGA as the site for its blue ribbon event met that responsibility with the same will to excel as did the Open's champion, Curtis Strange.

Almost from dawn till dusk, during the eight days the tournament resided at The Country Club, there was a constant flow of compliments about the setup and condition of the golf course.

Ben Crenshaw, a golf historian before his time, snapped to when it was suggested TCC was an easy course, what with pros like Peter Jacobsen (course record 64 in the fourth round) posting scores not in keeping with the "tricked-up" tracks the USGA sometimes is accused of concocting to retain the Open's traditionally tough reputation.

"Let's not jump the gun," Crenshaw answered suggestions TCC was a snap for the field. "The Country Club is a heck of a golf course. When it comes right down

to it, if we didn't have a little rain and if we had a little more wind, the scores would have gone way up.

"The scores have nothing to do with the way the course was set up and there's nothing wrong with the way it turned out (six-under for 72 holes was the low score). Compliment the scoring to agronomy. The greens are so true that if you are right on line, the ball will go in the way it's supposed to."

Fuzzy Zoeller agreed.

"This is one of the fairest Open courses I've ever played on," he said. "I've never seen a course that gives a player a chance for so many different shots. Usually in the Open, it's target golf—point A to point B. Not here, though."

While all the players were praising TCC to the hilt, golf course superintendent Bill Spence wondered at times that perhaps he and his crack crew may have done too good a job preparing the layout for the Open. Alas, he, too, agonized over the possibility TCC was too easy.

"I don't know about these scores," Spence remarked one day during the tournament. "Maybe we did make it kind of easy for some of these players. But we did everything according to specs, according to the way Rees Jones redesigned it and the USGA wanted it set up.

"Actually, the players were blessed with the best weather we've had for playing all year. It rained at the right time, the winds died down at the right time and the players played some of the best golf of

*Continued on page 2*

**OPEN FIELD** *Cont. from page 1*

their lives at the right time.

"But only those close to the scene realize how favorable all of the circumstances were. Some guy somewhere will pick up a paper and see that six or seven-under was the winning score and he'll come to the immediate conclusion that the course was too easy. But, really, I've heard nothing but compliments."

It's been passed all around the golfing universe that Spence and his TCC crew did a marvelous job.

"Yeah, it's nice to get all the pats on the back and hear all the praise ringing in my ears," Bill told. "But there should be a recording made of them so I can play all the compliments back to my crew. It's all due to them. They deserve the credit."

As player after player and many a USGA official marveled at the condition of TCC, Spence couldn't hold back the fact that he rated this year's product only No. 2 in matter of tournament-conditioned courses.

"Right," he disclosed. "We had the Trans-Miss Tournament at the Kansas City Country Club in the early '80's and I think it was in better shape than this course. I guess everything fell into place even tighter than we had here. Regardless, I'm very satisfied with the way things turned out. Certainly, all the elements were in our corner."

The Open lasted one day longer than scheduled, what with the playoff between Strange and Nick Faldo pushing the course through another championship round.

Shortly after, Spence and his crew had another job facing them.

"Now, we have to put everything back the way we found it before we prepared for the Open," Bill shrugged. "We'll be taking down tents, propping up tramped-down rough and doing general clean-up chores. Then, it will be back to business as usual. I liked it, though. It was fun."

It also was a huge success...thanks in

very large part to Bill Spence and the crew that produced what contender Bob Gilder called, "The best Open course I've played on and I've been in 14 of these things."

And that's putting it mildly.

**GERRY FINN**

**DIVOT DRIFT** *Cont. from page 1*

100 degree heat to have the privilege of watching the back of the heads of spectators standing in front of them, the spot light should shine on the marshals, most appropriately referred to as uniformed spectators, who allow the spectator situations to consistently walk that fine line between chaos and disaster.

Remember, Golf World, without the golf fans who pay the freight, the golf heroes of the world would be resigned to playing for \$5.00 a side on a Saturday afternoon.

Without a doubt, it's hats off to The Country Club for undertaking and brilliantly carrying off "ONE OF THE WORLD'S MAJOR SPORTING EVENTS." One can only hope that the Open will find its way back to Massachusetts before the 100th anniversary of Ouimet's incredible upset victory.

Bill Spence, superintendent of The Country Club is to be congratulated for the superb condition of the golf course. He and his assistant Patty Knaggs and their staff did an unbelievable job of preparing the course for the US Open.

Prominent among the grounds staff for the week was Kevin Lyons, Turf Specialty Co., Eric Kleinsorge, assistant superintendent, Myopia, on sand bunkers and International's Ron Milenski and Nick Commuso on the divot crew. Phil Cassidy, attending the pro shop tent.

It appears the members of the NEGCSA goofed for its small percentage of volunteers at The Country Club.

Remember, the US Open is just a prelude to this year's major pro golf in New England. July 11 - July 17 LPGA at

Tara Ferncroft C.C., Paul Johnson host superintendent. Seniors classic July 27 - July 31 Nashawtuc C.C., Paul Miller host superintendent. Pleasant Valley classic the second week of September, Paul Veshi host superintendent.

The qualifying site for the Massachusetts state amateur was moved from Ponkapoag G.C. because of its disgraceful condition. It has been said that the Metropolitan District Commission will not channel funds back into the golf course. This may be true, however, you must first start with a qualified competent golf course superintendent.

Don't forget the meeting at Gardner. This will be the first round for all flight championships.

Ending on a sad note, Jerry D'Anello, former superintendent of Winthrop G.C., passed away suddenly in Florida, Jerry was 35 years old.

**RON KIRKMAN**

## The Super Speaks Out

Welcome to The Super Speaks Out — a monthly feature which offers the golf course superintendent a forum to express his or her views on topics and issues relating to their profession.

This month's question: *What has been the reaction to using sprinkler heads as yardage markers and has the playing aid made a difference in speed of play at your golf course?*



**Joe Rybka,**  
**Thorny Lea Golf Club:** "This is one thing that's really catching on. Why? Because it's something the members go for in a big way. They really like it.

"And when I do something to make them happy. Well, you know.

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## THE SUPER *Cont. from page 2*

"I think the idea probably got going because of the confusion some of the natural markers make. After a while, markers like hemlock bushes and maple trees are hard to distinguish and pretty soon golfers are marching off distances because they're not sure just where the actual marker is.

"Our sprinkler marker system starts about 200 yards from the green and comes in every 30 yards. So, it gives golfers yardage they never had under the old system of putting in a bush or tree 150 yards from the green.

"One of the biggest pluses is on holes with hidden greens. The sprinkler markers take all the guesswork of club selection out of a player's mind.

"I'm not too sure about speeding up play. However, it has to make some kind of an impact in that area because the markers virtually eliminate the time-consuming act of changing clubs four or five times a round.

"Another thing it might influence is better scoring, at least for guests playing the course.

"I just think it's an advancement that coincides with the rest of the progress found in golf. It's a big hit here."



**Dave Barber, Blue Hill Country Club:** "I know my members like the sprinkler marker system and they seem to rely on it more and more.

"Personally, I don't think it's that much of a help shooting better scores or playing faster. In fact, most of our members know the yardage from almost any point in the fairway. Besides, my markers are in the middle of the fairway and who hits the ball down the middle every time?

"There's really no maintenance of the markers required which means it doesn't add to my conditioning and other problems.

"If the idea has merit, it comes on strong when members bring guests here to play. It helps them get a better feel for the course and it also serves as an ego-booster for the member.

"I rate the sprinkler head marker as another gimmick, a fad...simply because only the serious golfer benefits. Most of the average club members rely on their own perception and experience with a certain shot.

"At least, that's the way I perceive it."



**Ron Kirkman, Needham Golf Club:** "Mark me down as one hundred percent in favor of the sprinkler head marker system.

"My members? They must be close to a thousand percent in favor of them.

"Naturally, they are a blessing for me because our course is a nine-holer with the yardage changing in front and back nine play. For example, on my No. 7 hole we have a four-level tee that can run shots from 111 to 196 yards. When setting tee markers, I keep in mind the sprinkler head markers and it all falls into place as a better course setup for the players.

"I'd like to think this is another service the golf course superintendent provides for his or her members. In fact, I take pains when setting up the course for tournaments—that the sprinkler have markers will help players adjust to yardage changes.

"It could be that sprinkler head marking will leak over into the pro ranks. Right now, the pros march off yardage and spot yardage by measuring from bunkers or trees. Why not use the sprinkler heads? One thing's for sure. It would speed up their play.

"I'm really enthused about the sprinkler head system. It has so many advantages over the old bush-tree stuff. Older members surely benefit from it as their depth perception weakens with age.

"As far as I'm concerned, this is far from being a gimmick or a fad. I like it, my members like it. Guess that makes it unanimous here"

GERRY FINN

## -POSITION OPENING-

Pine Meadows Golf Club  
9 holes Lexington, MA

Contact: Mr. Peter Mills  
(617) 862-9632

## More About *Poa Annua*

No subject has been more thoroughly cussed and discussed in golf course circles than annual bluegrass. Have you ever been to a conference when this grass (weed) wasn't a subject for discussion? Every conceivable management and herbicidal control potential has been talked and written about for as long as most of us remember.

I have visited several golf courses in the past few months and I must say I have never seen *Poa annua* any more reproductive than I have this year. Seed heads are so dense there doesn't seem room for vegetation. There may be a reason for this extra heavy seeding this year. It seems that all plants make extra effort to survive when they are subject to stress. Drought, heat, cold or any abnormal stress seems to trigger a reproductive mechanism that tells the plant - reproduce! The prolonged dry season of 1987 may have been the trigger. Floral initiation for the 1988 season was initiated in late 1987. Flowering primordia with all grasses are formed during late summer and fall. *Poa annua* is a very opportunistic grass because of its seeding potential and it really doesn't need much encouragement. We can depend on it to produce heavily every year and not just in the spring. It can reproduce at heights below the mower setting - no matter how close.

Many superintendents have decided to join the culprit rather than fight it. In some instances we might have lots of bare ground if it weren't for *Poa*. Yet weighing the pros and cons it is also generally

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Boston Five Classic July 11-17. Tara Ferncroft C.C. Danvers/Middleton, MA. Those planning to attend may pick up their passes at the WILL CALL desk in the hotel. Cards honored with proper identification are GCSAA, NEGCSA and Cape Cod Turf Managers Association. Host superintendent - Paul Johnson.

## **POA ANNUA**

*Cont. from page 3*

agreed that we turf managers have created the problem through over-management. Too much water, fertilizer, high soil pH's close mowing and use of unadapted grasses are all management factors that have increased the presence of annual bluegrass.

As with all species of turfgrass there are many types of annual bluegrass. Researchers have identified over 56 types. They are coarse, fine, dark or light colored, annual or perennial in habit, erect, decumbent, very reproductive to no seed production, etc. Selection and breeding work with the species is in progress and maybe we will eventually join it rather than fight it.

The first control method should be through management. If we will provide the optimum management for the grass or grasses we want we will discourage *Poa*. Secondly, there are at least two methods of control we can employ successfully if we use them wisely and have some patience. The first is with the various PGR's (Plant Growth Regulations) that are available to us.

There is ample evidence that these materials work well when used as recommended. If we can eliminate or reduce seed production we can slowly reduce the incidence of this weed. We also reduce upward of 75% of the mowing requirement during the often wet April to June period. The slight turf discoloration associated with their use isn't serious. Besides, we don't have much green color anyway when our turf is white with *Poa* seedheads.

A second method of control may be afforded with the herbicide, endothall. It has not been widely used by research Dr. Roy Goss and associates in Western Washington State and years of use in Australia have shown excellent results. I feel we have used it successfully here at our research station as well. It is not a quick, short-term solution and repeat use over several years seems to be indicated.

The endothall formulation being used is a sodium salt that contains 17.5 grams of active ingredient per liter. It is sprayed

at a rate of 1/4 to 1/3 ounces in 2 1/2 gals. of water per 1000 sq. ft. Typically, two applications at 2 to 4 week intervals are made in both spring and fall when temperatures are between 50° and 70°F. The result has been a gradual elimination of *Poa annua* over a 2-3 year period. It might be worth a try.

**C. RICHARD SKOGLEY,  
PROFESSOR,  
UNIV. OF RHODE ISLAND**

## **Grooming Reel Guide**

### **1. Introduction**

As you know, grooming is an old technique, but the "groomer" is relatively new. It is associated with the golfer's desire for faster, truer and healthier greens. There has been much discussion among superintendents, and articles have been written in trade publications concerning the actual benefits this tool provides. Because this management practice is so new, there has been little, if any, scientific research conducted to determine the long-term effects of grooming. It is difficult, therefore, to make precise recommendations on the use of a grooming reel. This is further complicated by the many variables which play a major role in achieving desired results. Some of the variables which must be considered are:

- General condition of the green
- Variety of grass on the green
- Season of the year
- The turf-management program
- Variation in traffic
- Stress periods, especially heat and humidity

All of these vary from golf course to golf course, and usually from green to green on the same course. The use of the grooming reel, therefore, requires a thorough understanding of agronomic aspects of the turf on the green which, in turn, determines the depth of setting and the frequency of use. It is recommended strongly that the superintendents experiment S-L-O-W-L-Y to achieve best results.

It is also recommended that the following tips be used for best results on the playing surface:

- Frequent, close, visual inspection of the green to determine the depth and/or frequency of grooming.
- Vary the degree of grooming in accordance with the need for each green. This will help to ensure constant ball speed on all greens of the golf course.
- During stress periods, it may be necessary to reduce, or even eliminate, use of the groomer.

### **2. What a Grooming Reel Does**

- Grooming is performed above the soil level. It cuts runners (stolons) and grass blades at less-aggressive depth settings; but, at more frequent intervals than is done with the traditional methods of verti-cutting.

- Grooming promotes the vertical or upright growth of grass and eliminates grain by cutting horizontally growing

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## **GCSAA News**

John A. Segui, CGCS, president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, announced today the GCSAA \$25,000 "Challenge For Excellence" in conjunction with the Boston Five Classic at Tara Ferncroft Resort near Boston, Mass., on July 16-17.

"We're excited to offer \$25,000 as a reward to the first member of the LPGA to ace the 16th hole during competition on Saturday or Sunday," Segui said.

"Today's golf course superintendent pursues excellence in developing playable conditions at his course just like the professionals who play to win."

The event will be televised on ESPN.

The first LPGA member to score a hole-in-one on Saturday or Sunday will receive \$12,500. The association also will donate \$7,500 to the Massachusetts Special Olympics program, and the GCSAA Scholarship & Research Fund will receive \$5,000 in the player's name.

"It's a chance for everybody to win," Segui said.

# GROOMING GUIDE *Cont. from p. 4*

grasses and runners.

- Grooming, in essence, removes more leaf area.

- Grooming provides some of the same benefits as verti-cutting. The main difference is that the cutting blades are spaced closer than on traditional verti-cutters, and the grooming reel is used more frequently.

- The more frequent use removes more grass and helps to control thatch build-up, especially during periods of maximum growth. For this reason, care must be exercised during periods when grass growth is reduced—for whatever reason.

- Grooming, in addition to routine turf management techniques, like aerification and topdressing, may permit one to raise the mowing height without sacrificing green speed.

- By maintaining a higher cutting height, the effective rooting depth of the turfgrass is increased and the grass is in a more healthy state. Also, it is better able to withstand wear, as well as environmental stresses.

## 3. What a Grooming Reel Does Not Do

- Grooming is not verti-cutting in the traditional sense; it is for use above soil level. It is similar to light verti-cutting. It provides for a frequent cutting of those elements that contribute to grain.

- Grooming has the potential to replace verti-cutting, depending on the overall management program.

- Verti-cutting will continue to be used for deeper penetration into the soil, for renovation purposes or preparation of overseeding.

- Grooming does not necessarily achieve, in all cases, increased ball speed. Ball speed is dependent on other factors, i.e., height of cut, frequency of cut, the number of daily mowings, health of turf, grass variety, etc. Some of these factors

may make a bigger impact on ball roll than grooming itself.

- Grooming can cause adverse effects, if used too frequently at aggressive settings (especially during environmental stress periods, i.e., heat, high humidity or traffic).

## 4. Grooming Reel Adjustments

A word of advice on grooming reel adjustment procedures. When adjusting a grooming reel, the following steps are recommended for optimal results:

**First:** Set the desired height of cut.

**Second:** Set one grooming reel in raise/disengage position. Set one flush with the rollers and set one 1/32-inch above the height of cut.

**Third:** Make several passes, preferably over the practice green or nursery, before using the unit on a regular green.

**Fourth:** Judge the amount of grass in the basket of number one, two and three, and readjust accordingly.

**Fifth:** Visually inspect the results and

decide which setting to use for the best job. Make further adjustments if necessary.

**Sixth:** Set all grooming reels to the same desired depth.

**CAUTION:** A 1/32-inch depth setting can make a very substantial impact on grass removal and, more importantly, on the severity of grooming.

*The user must be aware that the groomer may cause adverse effects if used frequently at an aggressive setting. This is especially true during environmental stress periods, i.e., heat, high humidity or heavy traffic.*

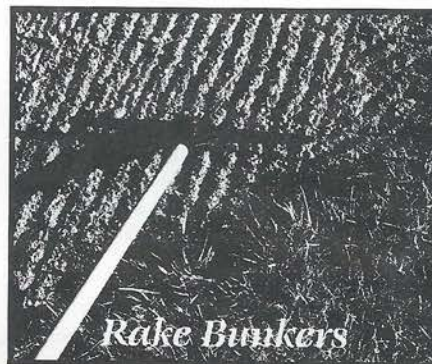
In summary, the grooming reel may be the best tool available to the superintendent for managing the greens precisely and in accordance with the desire of the golfer. However, timing, frequency of use and depth of setting must be managed properly!

HELMUT ULLRICH  
The Toro Co.

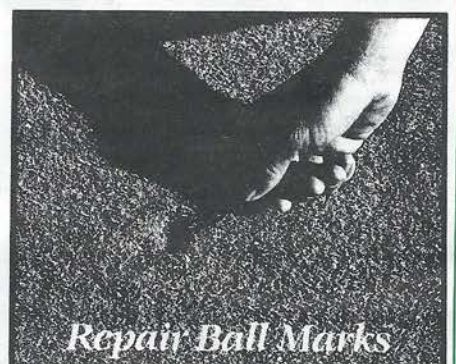
After you follow  
through, don't  
forget to follow  
through.



*Replace Divots*



*Rake Bunkers*



*Repair Ball Marks*

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