

## Golf Guide '87

# Course care the key to better golf

By **BRUCE ETHERIDGE**  
Rarely noticed, often unappreciated and mostly overlooked are those mystery men and women who tend local golf courses to keep them in perfect playing shape.

Even before the day's first golfers take to the course, maintenance people are out there trimming, clipping, mowing and growing, watering and fertilizing the grounds of each hole.

The golfer of today—even the average duffer—is more demanding, says Gordon Witteveen, course superintendent for the Board of Trade course in Woodbridge. "They want perfection," he said.

Kimmo Salonen, superintendent of the York Downs Golf and Country club agrees. "Heavy tractor operation is a thing of the past," he says. Both men have taken to mowing fairways and rough with the same equipment used to produce the surface on greens.

"We keep our roughs better than most people's front lawns," Witteveen says.

Obviously, the most important aspect of course care is the turf. That's why most course superintendents have a bachelor of science degree in agronomy, says Witteveen.

To keep courses lush and green, these specialists are trying to overhaul their courses completely with Bent grasses. It's a northern climate species developed at Penn State University in the U.S.

"The arch enemy of golf course superintendents is the

## Glowing balls make night golf possible

Approaching the 17th green you're down a stroke. On the line is the tab for clubhouse drinks. But twilight is beginning to settle in. It's really too dark to continue. Time to pack it in? Not anymore.

A revolutionary invention—glow in the dark golf balls—can come into play perfectly in twilight situations.

"It's a big breakthrough," says George Meikle, president of High Tech Life Styles Inc., Canada's only distributor of Nitelite balls. "Instead of having to quit at dusk players take out the Nitelite and finish the course."

Six million Nitelite balls have been sold in the U.S. and more than 400 evening tournaments were held last year.

Mr. Meikle said 10,000 of the balls have been sold in Canada since being introduced last fall.

According to Mr. Meikle, the Nitelite "hits up to 85 per cent of the distance of a regular ball."

The translucent cut-proof balls are illuminated by small lightsticks about the size of a match that are inserted into balls. They can be seen up to half-mile away.

Nitelite balls are the official size and weight of regular balls, Mr. Meikle says. He claims they fly as true as any golf ball, have good loft, backspin and putt true.

A ball and lightstick set costs \$6.98. Additional lightsticks are \$1.50 each. Currently, they are only sold at golf pro shops. Lightsticks come in four colors: green, blue, yellow and pink.

annual Blue Grass," Witteveen says. "It dies in the winter from ice and cold and dies in summer from sun and heat."

Another advantage of the Bent grasses variety is that it only requires moderate watering and fertilizing—an important consideration for a golf course, Salonen says.

The reduced care needed to maintain the Bent Grasses not only cuts down on interfering with play but keeps maintenance costs lower as well.

Witteveen estimates approximately 100,000 rounds of golf are played each year at his course.

The Board of Trade course, the second largest in the area to Spring lakes, also has about 150 people out for winter golf each year.

Fairways are plowed and greens are swept clear. It's a year-round affair for Witteveen and the course.

That's why maintenance supervisors are challenged each year to keep healthy fairways and greens despite trampling.

Witteveen uses an aerator "to punch holes in ground to aerate the roots of grass making it grow more luxuriously."

Salonen also uses an aerator "to help absorb foot compression" and "prevent the soil from being compacted." Course care is "more than just cutting the grass," Salonen emphasizes.

The aerators drive thousands of half-inch holes into the soil over a two-foot surface.

And while both men concede the business is becoming more mechanized, it still takes a great deal of hand labor in manuring hilly parts of a course.

According to Witteveen, the equipment at the Board of Trade course "runs about half-a-million dollars" and includes six tractors, 12 riding green's

mowers, sprayers, sand trap rakes and fertilizer spreaders.

It also takes "a lot of time and manpower" to maintain a course according to Salonen, who says \$400,000 is spent yearly on maintenance for the York Downs links.

Duties of course superintendents include tree planting and landscaping.

"I make suggestions and do changes such as the shaping of sandtraps in an artistic fashion within the concept of the course architect," says Salonen.

The superintendent of York Downs is also constantly planting new trees and replacing dead ones. "I look at the strategy of a hole and place trees to make the golf course

play as it should be played," he says.

An interesting fact about tree planting is the reluctance of superintendents to place trees on the west side of greens and tee off sites.

Salonen explains: "Trees on the west side of greens and tees prevent morning dew from being burned off. In winter the

shade keeps those places that much colder letting ice settle. They also prevent good wind circulation which helps prevent disease and makes for a healthier turf."

Next time a chunk of turf goes farther than the ball, remember the maintenance people and replace the divot.



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