

The "Man," More Than Anything Else, Is The Big Factor in Turfgrass Management

By FRED V. GRAU

THIS IS a Roundup of the year's progress in course maintenance, an assessment and evaluation of our present position and some predictions.

The "Man"—in Manager today is the most important single factor in the turfgrass world. This trend will continue. All these years we have tried to lift ourselves by our bootstraps professionally and financially by growing better turf. The supts. and the scientists were not among those who profited financially. Regardless of improved playing conditions in every department there are far too many "green-

★

The second article in this series by Grau and Noer will appear in January GOLFDOM.

★

keepers" who still push mowers, too many who are stuck down in the barn without an office, too many who know nothing of their club's finances let alone their own budgets. The salaries of far too many are still less than a bricklayer can make — and the bricklayer is through at 5 o'clock.

Simultaneously we hear, "We need higher salaries" and "We are desperately short of trained men to fill the position of supt." We don't know which came first, the hen or the egg, but we are reasonably certain that: 1. There will always be a shortage of trained men to manage courses until the salary scale and other benefits are attractive to good men who are competent to accept the responsibility and willing to take the punishment.

2. Salary scales will rise and other benefits gradually will be granted in direct proportion to the supt's business ability.

I have given up the idea I once had that a super-knowledge of turf and the ability to produce the finest championship turf was the "Open Sesame" to raises and other benefits. Now I am convinced

that a needed key to the superintendent's progress is a thorough knowledge of business methods and finances.

The successful supt. of tomorrow is the man who understands business and finance so well that he will be an indispensable party not only at committee meetings but at board meetings.

Money Is A Mystery

For instance, surveys have been conducted in a given area wherein supt's salaries, golf course budgets and maintenance practices are reviewed and compared. It has happened that a chmn. couldn't understand why his course operated with a budget \$20,000 higher than a similar club close by. Naturally, he wanted the supt. to cut expenses on the course. Almost a complete lack of uniformity in business methods was revealed. At the neighboring club the supt's salary wasn't included in the golf course budget. At the home club the maintenance of clubhouse grounds, garbage disposal and caddy-master's salary were on the course budget.

I am sure that I need go no further into detail. In order to compare budgets and salaries there must be uniform accounting methods.

There is the nearly universal complaint: "The club spent \$125,000 this year on a new pool and I couldn't even get a new set of mowers that I needed." It seems that if there is that much money to spend there should be enough to properly equip the course for first-class maintenance.

Or: "The new locker rooms cost nearly \$200,000 and I can't even have a decent soil shed. My machinery has to set out in the weather."

Have we kidded ourselves into thinking that the golf course is the most important function of a golf club? Or have these apparent inequities come about as a result of poor business management?

(Continued on page 80)

Grau—Turf Roundup

(Continued from page 58)

We can't blame the chmn. because they come and go and a dentist (6 handicap) isn't really expected to know too much about course needs. Someone must tell him in writing.

Through contacts with leading supts., several valuable lessons have been learned. One is that there must be an item in the annual budget for Equipment Replacement. Raises usually do not go to the man with greasy clothes who keeps on patching old wornout machines until they are held together with baling wire, chewing gum and prayer. The supt. with clean clothes and bright new (or new-looking) equipment is far more likely to have his paycheck fattened annually.

"Saving the club's money" by maintaining obsolete equipment is doing no favor to the club and no one gives or gets credit for that. The time to get new equipment is when the budget is prepared — not when a machine breaks down from old age during the middle of the season. When this happens the committee is likely to say, "Didn't he know the condition of his machinery? Why didn't he ask for replacement when we had our budget meeting?"

Most golf clubs have just so much money they can spend in any one season or year. A few have special assessments for additions. With better understanding of finances, and by demonstrating his ability to develop and handle a budget, the supt. of tomorrow will be given much more opportunity to see and to work within the whole financial picture of the club. When this happens club and the supt. both will be in sounder positions.

Learning the Business of Golf

What sort of picture does this paint for the supt. who is on the job now who has not developed needed business knowledge? Is the picture black and hopeless for him? Not at all! Among the ranks of the golf course supts. there are many who have developed excellent business and accounting methods. In the Q & A department recently we named several, necessarily omitting many others. Their methods are available or could be made available. In most cities there are night schools where one can learn business principles. The chmn. himself may be the most help of all. Frequently he is a successful business man who can help the supt. set up a sound system. The best part of this is that the two would be working together! A mutual understanding will develop which will be beneficial to all.

So far, not a word about turf — diseases, insects, fertilizers, grasses, etc., etc. This is the technical side of maintenance, ineffective without a fair budget which is sufficient to provide all needed items to maintain the kind of a golf course members want.

As I see it, arrangements must be made to provide the supt. with everything he needs, with the understanding that the course is

his responsibility. Credit or blame rests then on the supt.'s shoulders only. How much better this setup than where the chmn. personally tries to give orders to workmen and usually ends up with things in a mess.

A successful chmn. recently said to me, "I figure my job is to be interested in and to know what is going on, not to interfere, and to go to the board and get what the supt. tells me we need to keep a good golf course".

Included in the duties of our supts. of tomorrow is the matter of reports. Nearly everyone likes to get a report. In order to write a good report one must be able to use the English language effectively. He must be logical, know the subject thoroughly, use non-technical language, be brief, and make reports at regular intervals.

Keeping the chmn., committee and board informed may be a very good way to establish a basis for regular salary increases. If the supt. makes a report only when a pump burns out or tractor breaks down he could earn a very low rating for himself. Reporting the good things regularly can minimize occasional unfortunate occurrences. A bit of human psychology is a very useful part of one's training.

Golfers Decorate Walls with Achievement Awards

Golfers who like to have evidence of their prowess out where everyone can see it have a friend in Dode Forrester, Hobs (N. M.) CC pro. Whenever man, woman or junior at Dode's course shoots the lowest score of his or her career, scores a hole-in-one, eagle, breaks the course record or wins a prize in a club tournament, the Hobbs pro awards them an appropriate certificate.

Suitable for framing, the certificate reads like this:

Dode Forrester's
Major Golf Achievement Award
Hobbs Country Club

Awarded to _____

(Dode Forrester, Pro)

Quite a few awards have been made since Forrester originated the idea early this year and many of them are hanging on walls in homes and offices throughout the city.