Name the Job—
Taylor Handles It
at Black Mountain

By JOE DOAN

Ross Taylor is a man for all seasons —
which is not only an asset but a neces-
sity in Black Mountain, N.C., where golf
is played around the calendar. And, since
Black Mountain isn’t Winged Foot or
Saucon Valley, Taylor has to be man of
all occupations — club manager, pro, supt.
head tractor driver and even on occasions,
fry cook.

If Taylor had to answer to as many
bosses as he has jobs, it would be enough
to drive a man of even his equable tem-
perament to distraction. But Ross has
shown unusual foresight in picking his
bosses. All happen to be himself, as he
is not only the park commissioner of
Black Mountain, but THE park commis-
sioner. When the commissioner reprimands
the supt. in a case like this, it stays in the
family.

When Taylor isn’t overseeing the differ-
ent operations at his club, it isn’t unusual
for him to be summoned for consultation
purposes to other clubs and locations in
the Asheville area where fine turf is cul-
tivated. He has designed courses and built
them and supervised the renovation of
others. Some years ago, when for some
unexplained reason Ross wasn’t working a
16-hour day from January through De-
cember, he managed to work in a moon-
lighting job as a turf supply salesman.

Cement Worker, Too

A combination of environment and
necessity have made Taylor a complete
golf course man. When he came to Black
Mountain GC in 1941 from Asheville CC,
he was a turf specialist. Then, World War
II reduced the club’s staff to the extent
that Ross had to fill in first as manager
and later as pro. If there was carpentry,
plumbing, cement work or a machinery
overhaul job to be done, he did it. When
the original 9-hole course, built in 1931
with WPA labor, was renovated several
years ago, Taylor supervised it. When a
second nine was added in 1962-63, he de-
signed and constructed it.

Victim of Environment

“Don’t overemphasize my alleged ver-
satility,” the Black Mountain pro-man-
ger-supt., etc., says, smiling. “I’m a crea-
ture of my environment — or a victim of
it. When the different vacancies occurred,
I guess it was natural that I should fill
them. There was nobody else around. Ac-
tually, my wife, Martha, has always run
the clubhouse. She lets me think that I
tell her what to do.

“Together, we are doing what many
husband and wife teams around the coun-
try are doing — running a golf club,”
Taylor explains.

The Black Mountain factotum concedes
that his duties as a pro have been rather
spotty. He has tapered off from teaching
in recent years, but in the mid-'50s gave
as many as 200 lessons a year. Back in 1927, when he broke into golf, he was an assistant pro. Then he drifted away from the shop and it wasn’t until around 1943 that he began selling merchandise and teaching again.

When he came back to the pro job, Taylor says he was no better than a fair player. At first, when he started to teach, it was a case of staying a lesson ahead of the pupil. “Some of these early teaching trials were difficult for both myself and the pupil,” Ross recalls. “But I worked hard at the job, found I liked it, and eventually got to the place where I felt I was giving the pupil some help. At least, built all greens at Waynesville CC and Lake Lure. He has served as a consultant in the construction of other courses in the Swannanoa Valley area and, as already mentioned, is on call as a turf consultant for several clubs, nurseries, schools and industries.

Taylor is a charter member of the Carolinas GCSA and has been president of that organization for four terms at different times. In recent years, the Carolinas turf group has been able to persuade the N.C. state legislature to appropriate funds to support a turf research program at North Carolina State University and also establish a turf management course at that school.

Just this spring, Taylor staked out 20,000 square feet in bent, bluegrass and Bermuda experimental plots at Black Mountain for Dr. W. B. Gilbert, NCSU agronomist. He not only worked diligently with other turfmen to get the state legislators to pass the laws that gave the university its research and school programs, but as a personal mission, has visited numerous high schools throughout the state selling turf management as a career for youngsters.

Another Test Site

At the moment, Taylor is preparing a site at his club for a second North Carolina State research project, conducted by William Lewis. It is going to be a pre-emergence control center where the resistance of bluegrass and fescue and bent-grasses to crabgrass and broad leaf weeds will be tested over a five-year period.

Taylor was the first supt. in the Carolinas to experiment with Bermuda 127 and 57 as fairway covers. Both strains proved to be durable enough, yet unacceptable because of the obnoxious seedheads they produce. When he renovated the old nine at Black Mountain and built the new side, Ross decided on bluegrass and fescue for the fairways. The original South German bent was retained on the old greens, but the new were planted to a combination of Pennlu, Old Orchard, C-7 and Seaside. All these strains were grown in the Black Mountain nursery.

Since Black Mountain is about 2,500

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Man For All Jobs

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feet above sea level and temperatures rarely go over the 90-degree mark, Taylor’s greens are rarely hard hit by disease. Treatment with iron sulphate, Capton and Thiram is kept on the light side, is considered preventative, but is made weekly through the summer. The big battle during the summer is fought against crabgrass, which comes in in June and persists through September. PMAS has been used primarily for crabgrass control, but Taylor is planning to start small scale testing of both spray and granular formulations that Lewis, the NCSU agronomist, has developed.

Taylor’s green fertilization program calls for applying approximately one pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet a month. Following double aerification in March, topdressing and verticutting, 10-6-4, at a rate of a little better than a pound a month, is applied from April through June. Thereafter, treatment is cut down, with an organic being substituted. Ross has two soil tests made annually and strives to keep the pH level at 6.5.

Black Mountain got nationwide publicity a little more than a year ago when newspapers across the country carried stories of its 745-yard, par 6 No. 17 hole. It is said to be the longest hole in the country. A small church is located about two-thirds of the way down the fairway and adjoining it is a cemetery. Only four eagles have been scored on No. 17 in the 15 or so months the second nine has been in play.

Ross Taylor’s good friend, Billy Graham, lives just beyond the ridge that is the backdrop for the second nine and is a frequent visitor to the Black Mountain course. The world famed evangelist presided at the dedication ceremonies that opened the new side a little more than a year ago. Graham, incidentally, is an accomplished golfer, often shooting in the high 70s.