



INTERNAL ORGANIZATION VITAL TO CLUBS

A recent article in *GOLFDOM* drew attention to the two basic problems facing the governing bodies of clubs today: efficient operation and expenses. In many respects both problems are one and the same. The ways in which a club deals with them can make or break it.

This writer has watched clubs operate for nearly 20 years. It would be fair to say that changes within the industry are, at this point, most encouraging. The worry is that far too few clubs are adapting to the changing times.

Nowhere is this rigidity more evident than in the internal organizations of many clubs. All too frequently, a club's board of directors will think of the golf professional as a playing companion, the superintendent as a grass grower and the club manager as a maitre d'.

These men serve these specific functions, but they do much more as well, and I would like to heartily endorse the conclusions drawn in the article, "Presidents and Owners: How Do They Run Their Clubs?" in the April issue of *GOLFDOM*.

Today's professional staff should be just that, professional. As professionals, they should be the operating team of the club, carrying out the policies established by the board of directors. Once those policies are established, the professional staff should have full decision-making authority within the guidelines set by the board.

Providing the club selection committee did its job when the professional staff was hired, that staff should represent the continuity of authority within the club. The staff should, in fact, be far more qualified to run the club than any single member, regardless of his occupation. If they are not, then the fault probably

lies with the club.

The case cited in which one club had had 20 managers in 20 years would seem to be inexcusable. That some of the managers were unqualified for the work for which they were hired reflects more on the selection committee than it does on any individual manager. One wonders who was checking references.

More often than not, the professional staff are probably college graduates and have degrees in their respective work specialties. Where this is not true, they certainly should have been participants in the continuing education programs offered by their professional associations.

Nowhere is this more true than in the case of the golf course superintendent. Today's superintendent probably has a degree in agronomy from one of the fine state schools specializing in this field; he keeps abreast of the latest developments in his specialty through regular contacts with his association, the Golf Course Superintendents Assn. of America, and through the seminars at its annual conference. His knowledge must span the fields of chemistry, pesticides, occupational safety, business and budgeting, landscaping, architecture and human relations. Indeed, more than one superintendent has become the general manager of his club.

All three professionals should sit in on board meetings. Many progressive clubs already are making their staff reports a regular part of the monthly agenda; some even include them at meetings of the executive committee.

Again, this writer would like to put in a word for the superintendent. He, most of all, should be included at such meetings.

The golf professional sees almost every golfing member of the club; the club manager is in touch with

members whenever they entertain. Because of the nature of his work, the superintendent rarely sees any but the most persistent golfers.

Yet, it is the superintendent who is given responsibility of maintaining the largest and most expensive piece of the club's property—the golf course. He should at least have as much recognition and contact with members as the rest of the club's professional staff. Lack of it can be crippling.

Just as I support the authority of the club's professional staff, so do I deplore the inferences that the club's operating committees—green, house and grievance—are a hindrance to an efficient organizational chart.

All committees should be vehicles for member involvement and participation in club activities. Operating committees are no exception.

This is not to say that the criticism is always unjustified. Operating committees should play a supportive role to management by serving as resources to the professional staff. It is only when these committees attempt to usurp the authority of the professional staff that trouble arises.

There are a number of fine descriptions of the responsibilities and limitations of club committees. They all point out that committees advise and consult with the professional staff; they do not interfere with their decision-making responsibilities.

In practice, active involved committees provide a vehicle by which clubs can stimulate membership growth through member participation in club affairs.

In fact, the development of an efficient internal club organization headed by a board of directors that is aware of its policy-making responsibilities and directed by a qualified professional staff probably is the best solution to the second problem: high operating costs. □