

# BUYING FOR THE CLUB: Who Says Yes or No?

When considering the operation of a golf club, we tend to departmentalize the administrative titles with their particular functions and products. If someone says, "superintendent," we immediately think, "course maintenance, turf materials and equipment"; say, "golf professional" and we reply, "pro shop, golf equipment, golf apparel"; "club manager" brings to mind "clubhouse, foods and beverages."

Although such associations make a neat and simple mental framework, a formal GOLFDOM survey of club administrators and officials tells us that in actuality the different functions at a golf club are not that distinct. There is much overlapping and crossing of lines.

Some administrators and officials, the survey shows, work more independently than others; none works autonomously, particularly in the spending or decision-making for his major area of responsibility. Nor did any of the hundreds of administrators or officials surveyed reveal opposition to a certain amount of multiple involvement in his area of responsibility, because the survey responses showed an open and voluntary seeking of advice from fellow administrators and officials.

The basic setup of most clubs, with their committees, chairmen, joint meetings and member involvement, precludes the isolation of any administrator or official. Even the owner of a club, with all of his singular, potential power, would not hire a staff of professional administrators—superintendent, club manager and golf professional—and then, in dictatorial fashion, fail to consult them or listen to them. As a businessman, he would see the wisdom of regularly bringing together his executives, so "one hand knows what the other is doing."

Today's economic conditions, the

GOLFDOM's recent survey shows a stronger-than-ever emphasis on collective decision-making in the buying process at golf clubs. How do you stack up against the national norm?

by VINCENT J. PASTENA

high cost of club operations and the significant investment represented by certain club purchases also demand multiple decision-making. Indeed, it would be rare to find a club administrator who has authority to commit thousands of dollars for the purchase of a piece of equipment without prior consultation and approval.

Simply put, the basic question that GOLFDOM's survey attempts to answer is: Who influences who in decision-making and to what extent? Of course, questions delving into one's influence on another person and one's contribution to the buying decisions of another person are to some degree subject to each respondent's interpretation. In each survey question, some individuals preferred not to respond, indicating that these individuals were not sufficiently certain about their degree of influence on or contribution to a particular function to answer flatly "Yes" or "No." The "No Answers," therefore, were computed in the survey results. *In the survey report that follows, when it is stated, for instance, that 50 per cent answered "Yes" and 30 per cent answered "No," the reader should be aware that the remaining 20 per cent were "No Answers," even though this percentage is not given.*

This report has been organized by job and position titles—superintendents, golf professionals, club managers, presidents and owners and green committee chairmen. However, to

visualize a complete picture of the relationship of one administrator or official to the other two, we suggest reading all sections.

## SUPERINTENDENTS

GOLFDOM asked golf professionals, managers, presidents and owners, and green committee chairmen if they contribute to any buying decisions made by the superintendent. As expected, the green committee chairmen showed the greatest amount of involvement. Responses, in order of affirmative answers, broke down this way: *Green Committee Chairmen: Yes, 40.7%; No, 6.2%*

*Managers: Yes, 31.3%; No, 12.0%*  
*Presidents/Owners: Yes, 26.9% No, 8.7%*

*Professionals: Yes, 19.6%; No, 8.7%.*

Those who replied "Yes" were further questioned as to whether or not their influence extends to the selection of capital equipment and/or turf products. In view of the investment represented by capital equipment, affirmative responses by all groups were greater in this product area than in turf products.

On capital equipment, "Yes" responses were: green committee chairmen, 92.5%; presidents/owners, 89.8%; managers, 84.6%; professionals, 81.0%.

On turf products, "Yes" responses were: professionals, 68%; green committee chairmen, 64.2%; managers, 61.7%; presidents/owners, 55.1%.

Superintendents were then asked if the green committee chairman's buying influence on capital equipment and turf materials actually gets to the fine point of brand selection.

On brand selection of capital equipment, 29.1% of the superintendents said "Yes," the green committee chairman has an influence; 54.2% replied "No." On brand selection of turf materials, 20.0% of the super-

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## YES OR NO continued

intendents said "Yes"; 61.1%, "No."

The green committee chairmen, however, exercise considerable power over money matters involving capital equipment. Asked if the green committee chairman has an influence on the *budget allowance for capital equipment purchases*, 56.7% of the superintendents replied, "Yes," 23.3% said "No."

### GOLF PROFESSIONALS

It is generally assumed that the professional, more than any other administrative employee, operates independently. When asked if they *contribute to any buying decisions made by the professional*, the surprising responses of the other administrators and officials were these:

*Superintendents*: Yes, 40.7%; No, 16.1%.

*Managers*: Yes, 31.3%; No, 14.7%.

*Green Committee Chairmen*: Yes, 26.6%; No, 15.0%.

*Presidents/Owners*: Yes, 21.9%; No, 14.4%.

Of those in each group who replied "Yes," GOLFDOM asked if their *influence extends to the selection of golf equipment, apparel and/or golf accessories*. "Yes" responses by the four responding groups for each product category were as follows: *Golf equipment*: managers, 70.7%; presidents/owners, 58.4%; superintendents, 53.7%; green committee chairmen, 51.4%.

*Golf apparel*: managers, 62.6%; presidents/owners, 50.5%; superintendents, 37.0%; green committee chairmen, 35.1%.

*Golf accessories*: managers, 66.7%; presidents/owners, 57.4%; green committee chairmen, 48.6%; superintendents, 42.6%.

GOLFDOM turned to the professionals to elicit their views. Asked if they *consult any other administrators or officials in the purchase of pro shop merchandise*, 13.6% of the professionals said "Yes," 79.5% replied "No." Those professionals who responded "Yes" were asked which officials they consulted. The specific officials most frequently mentioned by the professionals were the club managers (named by 38.8%) and presidents/owners (named by 30.6%).

All professionals were asked if they felt *shop managers* are important to the merchandising aspects of the pro

shop. Almost 64% replied affirmatively.

Outside of their direct area of responsibility, professionals appear to be involved most in course maintenance. Part of the reason for this may be found in the responses to the question: *Do players come to you with complaints about the playing condition of your course?* More professionals—85%—responded "Yes" than those in the other four groups—superintendents (70.9%), green committee chairmen (81.2%), managers (70.5%), and presidents/owners (66.1%).

In view of this, 72% of the professionals said they are consulted about course maintenance. Of that group, almost 92% spent time with the superintendent and green committee chairmen on matters concerning course maintenance. Whether they presently are or are not, almost 80% of all professionals surveyed felt they *should* be consulted on course maintenance.

### CLUB MANAGERS

Asked if they *contribute to the buying decisions made by the club manager*, other administrators and officials replied as follows:

*Superintendents*: Yes, 59.4%, No, 12.7%.

*Professionals*: Yes, 49.0%; No, 12.7%.

*Presidents/Owners*: Yes, 34.7%; No, 8.0%.

*Green Committee Chairmen*: Yes, 29.1%; No, 10.0%.

Those who responded "Yes" were asked whether their influence extends to the *selection of materials for clubhouse improvement and/or food and beverages*. Responses revealed considerable involvement in clubhouse materials—presidents/owners, 87.8%; green committee chairmen, 75.5%; professionals, 73.5%; and superintendents, 52.3%. Less influence is exercised in food and beverage decisions. Some 53.2% of the presidents and owners, who contribute to manager decisions, said their influence extended to food and beverages. Affirmative responses by others were: professionals, 47.8%; green committee chairmen, 34.7%; superintendents, 27.9%.

Managers themselves were asked what areas of the club operation they are associated with on a decision-making basis. Some 81.3% of the managers said the clubhouse; 66.9%, locker room operations; 62.2%, dining

room; 58.2%, other recreational facilities; 57.0%, pro shop; 55.8%, golf course.

### PRESIDENTS AND OWNERS

Who advises and influences the club presidents and course owners? Replying that they contribute to the buying decisions of presidents and owners were 71.8% of the superintendents, 63.7% of the managers, 41.2% of the professionals, and 38.4% of the green committee chairmen.

Presidents and owners, in turn, indicated considerable involvement in most aspects of the club or course operation. Almost 55% serve on club committees. Of that group, almost 37% serve on *all* committees. A majority of the presidents and owners said they have an influence on purchases in every product category surveyed. Affirmative responses to purchasing influence were: capital equipment, 82.4%; materials for clubhouse improvement, 81.6%; turf materials, 62.4%; food, 54.7%; pro shop merchandise, 42.9%.

Among the major areas of responsibility for a majority of presidents and owners are: overseeing all office and administrative personnel, establishment of dues and assessment practices, purchase of insurance, purchase of land and establishment of committees. However, in the performance of their duties as presidents and owners, they do not seek autonomy. Almost 67% said they consult with other officials and administrative personnel. Only 9.8 per cent said they do not.

### GREEN COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

As would be expected, the superintendent is the administrator most heavily involved in the buying decisions of the green committee chairman. Almost 71% of the superintendents said they contribute to the green committee chairman's purchasing decisions. Minimal involvement was indicated by other administrators and officials in their "Yes" responses to the question of contributing to the buying decisions of the green committee chairman—managers, 28.8%; professionals, 21.8%; and presidents/owners, 21.8%.

On the green committee chairman's role in *brand selection*, 70.6% said they were consulted on brands of capital equipment, and 55.3% said

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years of service followed by an additional 10 per cent after each year, so that a total of 100 per cent occurs after 15 years.

3. Standardizes minimum funding for pension plans.

4. Establishes a voluntary program for portability through a central fund. Employees of participating employers would be able to transfer vested credits from one employer to another.

5. Establishes a planned termination insurance program, which would guarantee that vested credits of the employee would be paid if an employer should go out of business and if the pension plan of that employer does not have sufficient assets to pay.

6. Provides new rules for trustees and fiduciaries.

7. Requires more comprehensive disclosure by the employer to the Federal government and to workers.

8. Establishes Federal jurisdiction in this area and provides remedies both to the Government and to the worker in the form of civil suits for the enforcement of these provisions.

Requirements under HR 2 provide for full vesting after 10 years of the accrued portion of the regular return benefits attributable to periods after the effective date of the bill for vesting after a period not exceeding 10 years or 50 per cent of the entire accrued portion of regular retirement benefits, which would then be increased by 10 per cent a year after until 100 per cent has been reached or vesting after a period of service not exceeding 20 years of the entire accrued portion of the regular retirement benefits. The period of service then required for vesting would be reduced at least one year for each year the plan had been in effect after the effective date of the act, plus one year for each two years that the plan was in existence prior to enactment, until the required period of service did not exceed 10 years. The provisions of these bills do not seem relevant to smaller clubs, which generally employ less than 40 employees, but will affect larger organizations.

HR 2 seems to be the bill most palatable to clubs because of its low rate of vesting and lack of filing requirements with any governmental agency.

## ALIEN LEGISLATION

Another area of legislation that seems

to have a potential effect on clubs, concerns the entry and control requirements for alien workers.

Two bills have been submitted to the House. HR 982, which passed the House on May 3d and is currently in the Senate Judiciary Committee calls for the application of sanctions to employers who knowingly employ aliens, who have entered the country illegally. As of the present date, there are no prohibitions or sanctions against the employment of illegal aliens. This bill could have a very significant effect on some clubs employing numbers of aliens. The bill is designed not to impose any new obligations or requirements upon an employer, but to prohibit the knowing employment of illegal aliens.

Although the evidentiary standards for what constitutes a bona fide inquiry by an employer are not specified, one affirmative defense that an employer could use to rebut a charge of violation is the showing of a form, signed by the employee, in which the employee stated something on the order of, "I certify that I am a legally entered alien and lawfully permitted employment of this type."

Indeed, the committee report indicates that discussions have been held between the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the IRS regarding the feasibility of revising the W-4 Form to include such a question on citizenship and alien status.

A second bill, currently in the House is HR 981, concerns the establishment of a permanent system for Western Hemisphere immigration of aliens.

The House Judiciary Committee is holding hearings on this bill. The effect of the bill would be to establish a preference system for potential immigrants from the Western Hemisphere much the same as the requirements that now exist for immigrants from the Eastern Hemisphere. First preference under HR 981 would be married sons and daughters and unmarried brothers and sisters of United States citizens. The second would be highly skilled and professional workers. The third would be skilled laborers in occupations in which there is a shortage of employable persons in the United States. The fourth would be aliens principally engaged in religious duties. This would contrast with the present system of immigration from the Western Hemisphere

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expensive to maintain over its life span, runs smoother, quieter, and it is easier to control emissions with a water-cooled engine.

The use of diesel engine power. The torque characteristics of diesels are excellent. They have long life, lower operating costs and lower maintenance over the life of the engine. These benefits more than compensate for the initial higher price of the unit. They will become even more important as the gasoline shortage grows.

The last major consideration is cost analysis, not just initial cost, but what is called "total cost" buying. On the balance sheet must go: the initial price, the economic life of the unit; the operating costs; time and dollar savings; maintenance costs; risk of downtime, and trade-in value.

As in any business, it is the figure on the bottom line that counts.

Purchases made within the framework of the guidelines set out here have the advantage of assuring the superintendent that his recommendations are sound and of assuring the club that its money is being handled and managed properly. □

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they were involved in brand selection of turf materials.

Calls by turf products salesmen generally are handled jointly by the green committee chairman and the superintendent. Asked if the salesmen call directly on them or jointly with the superintendent, 57.6% of the green committee chairmen said "jointly," and only 5.3% said "directly on me." An even greater percentage of green committee chairmen—74.1%—said they work regularly with both the professional and superintendent on matters concerning course maintenance.

## GOLF CAR ACQUISITIONS

Golf cars are unique among the product mix in the operation of a club, because they probably draw more administrators and officials into the decisions on acquisition than any other product. The survey supports this belief. Asked if they have any voice in the purchasing or leasing of golf cars, "Yes" responses were: professionals, 75.6%; presidents/owners, 74.3%; managers, 59.4%; green committee chairmen, 52.9%; and superintendents, 37.5% □