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WHO PAYS

One Club Studied Members’ Accounts and Then Weeded Out All But the Live Ones

By “SLICER”

OUR CLUB, in common with many of the better class golf clubs, has the problem of the inactive member. Probably it would be better to refer to the general trouble as that with the non-supporting member. It is true enough that the private golf club is not organized for profit, but is equally true that it is not organized to incur a deficit that often may be traced to the failure of an appreciable portion of the membership to accept the responsibility of private club attachment in building up the necessary volume of business.

One of the usual identifying performances of the man who does not do his share in supporting the club is the violence of his protest when announcement is made of the deficit for which he and his associate laggards are to a major extent responsible.

When I was appointed to my position as chairman of the house committee, I was told by our president that his policy was all for a business administration. As it has been my observation that one of the unavoidable and essential details of a business administration is connected with getting the business, I began to study our situation. What I hoped for was to get volume that would enable us to operate profitably, for with the uncertainties of weather especially hazardous to the financial success of a golf club, the good days must yield a substantial amount of business.

Even a casual survey of the situation revealed that too many wanted to dance without paying the piper. I hold no brief for the pleasure or for the business aspects of snobbery. It seems self-evident to me that if a man is set upon belonging to one of the better class country clubs he may as well reconcile himself to the fact that the implied high social standing is going to cost him something. It certainly is no disgrace for a man to limit his expenses to what he can afford, but it’s at least the square thing for him to line up with what is accepted as the standard at his club for if he’s not carrying his part of the load he is doing his fellow members an injustice.

The matter gets deeper into ethics and character study than I care to go. We have the fellow who is in over his head in financial requirements, we have the fellow who doesn’t realize the club’s business situation and we have the nickle-nurser, often affluent, but so tight that he will haunt the department stores looking for cut-priced items in golf goods, subject himself to considerable inconvenience rather than patronize his club restaurants and in general make of thrift a slave-driver rather than an ally.

Analyze Situation

Now for the way in which we handled our own problem.

What I did was this: I had the bookkeeper make up a statement on July 1st,
last year, showing the amount of money each member spent during the first half of the year. This was made up on a sheet like a voucher journal and so divided that it showed so much for house account, so much spent in the pro shop, so much for caddie fees, and so much for guest fees, and then a total of all the accounts he had contracted. When making this distribution we learned whether or not this man used the clubhouse, that is, we knew just how much he had spent for meals; the second column told us whether or not he was patronizing his club pro shop, the third column told whether or not he used caddies or lugged the bag around himself; the fourth column showed whether or not he brought any guests to the club. We had the fifth column show how much he spent in the locker room but we threw this in with the house account.

The first statement told us something about the character, the spending ability, the natural tendency of the individual in so far as the interest of his club was concerned. In other words, if we found, as we did in some cases, that the man did not spend over $2.00 in three months for caddies and had not spent more than $5.00 or $10.00 in the shop, and his meals at the club consisted of a sandwich or two a week, he was placed in a certain class by this distinction. If we found he spent a considerable sum in the house, because his family entertained there and then noticed that he did not spend money for caddies or in the shop or locker room, we checked the activities of the pro shop to show whether or not the man was playing golf. We have a record in the shop showing how many times each man's clubs are used which now tells whether or not the member is using the course.

Pass Word Around

When this first record was made we called the Directors' attention to approximately 100 men who, it appeared, should have been playing on a daily fee course because they were not able to play any day except Sunday. They very seldom ate any meals at the house and very few of them used caddies. We did not tell the Directors the names of these men, but asked the Directors and the House Committee to circulate the information among the membership that a check was being made to ascertain who were the real honest-to-goodness golf players who should belong to a private club and also the names of those men who should not belong to a private club because of their inability or because of their failure to utilize the facilities there.

However, we did not say anything to the members until three months had passed, at which time we took off a second record from the ledgers. It was practically the duplicate of the first but of course the figures were a little larger; however, tight-wads, and the financially cramped fellows, and the men who did not use the club all appeared in the same columns and amounts as was shown by the first statement. When this second statement was finished, we were surprised to learn that we had about 50 men who had spent less than $50.00 for a full season's golf; that is, for meals, caddies, guests, pro shop supplies, drinks, and everything. In other words, they and their families had spent less than $50.00 during the entire year. We found an additional 125 men who had not spent $100.00, and we found that 50 men had spent more than $350.00.

The tabulation we made showed we had six classes in the membership, and the bookkeeper listed the names of those men according to expenditures in classes. For instance, the first class was from nothing to $50.00; the second class from $50.00 to $99.00; the third class from $100.00 to $149.00; the fourth from $150.00 to $199.00; the fifth from $200.00 to $300.00; and the sixth class more than $300.00.

Average Uniform

In analyzing the work sheet of the bookkeeper, we found that the men who spent money in any one department spent the average proportion in each of the other departments. In other words, if a man used caddies consistently, he spent money in the locker room and in the clubhouse, and if he spent money in the clubhouse he patronized the club pro shop. It showed, then, that if he was a real golf player, a real fellow, and a real club member, his expenditures were not lopsided and among the poor spenders practically all the accounts were listed in the grill and nothing was spent in the pro shop, practically nothing for caddies and nothing for guests.

You will understand, now, that we are not studying personalities or character, but the tabulation and the true facts revealed by this tabulation told us more about character, disposition and inclination than half a dozen books on the subject or stories which might have been told of the individuals. After this second tabulation