

# Cutback — A Curse or A Blessing

*From New England Newsletter*

Indeed, in these times of economic turmoil, it has come about that "cutback" is the most commonly-used word in discussions of budgets in any form and at any level. Naturally, the cutback of golf budgets has been proposed and in some cases, put into practice.

In 90 percent of logical response to putting the scissors to expenditures on the golf course, it has come to the point where the golfer must ask himself: "What is it I desire in the condition of the course and how much am I willing to pay for it?"

In the conditioning process, the superintendent can cut back on expenses, only if the golfer will accept what amounts to a "new" playing area. Less grooming equals higher scores. And is the golfer going to be able to live with such a situation?

The cutback in financial outlay would be a cutback in labor and materials necessary to retain the present playing quality of the golf course. And, in most clubs, both members and superintendents don't really know whether it is a curse or a blessing.

What would happen in a straight swipe at the budget is this: Roughs wouldn't be cut as frequently as they are, hazards would be left to roam in growth, banks and entrances to hazards would not be mowed or developed into escape hatches, cuts of collars, aprons and the like would be minimized. In general, the golf course would take on the old natural look . . . and with it a tougher look.

The returns in savings would be something for members to think over twice. There would be a reduction in part-time labor (probably the most pronounced saving), there would be less strain on equipment . . . thereby resulting in less frequent replacement of same and breakdowns of it would shrink because of unstrained use.

There is sound logic in the statement that "over-spending is a direct relative of overgrooming." And from the incidence of overgrooming, perhaps members would accept a "new" playing area.

A USGA spokesman, though, isn't so sure certain golfers will accept this form of comedown. "There is always that competition among clubs as far as condition of the course goes," he offered. "They may not want to be 'outgroomed' by a rival course. So, it really means it's up to the members."

On the other hand, there is some support for cutback in grooming and a return to the tighter, natural form of golf course. In the past 30 years most emphasis has been on providing the golfer with both the equipment and



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well-manicured course in order that he come away from it with a smile on his face and low numbers on his score-card.

"It may not set too well with the ego-maniacs," is one reaction to slowing down the golf track. "Some golfers are determined to keep their handicaps at figures they compiled 10 and 20 years ago. So, if the course becomes tougher, there's no way they can keep those figures. Next, they may not want to live with them which means they'll want the same playing conditions as provided for in the original budget."

It's obvious that a period of adjustment lies ahead for both the superintendent and the member should the country club agree to a practical form of cutback in conditioning the course and the member, in turn, will have to be aware of the consequences stemming from those limitations.

Then, again, a cutback could result in a better game all-around for everyone. It definitely is a case of individual taste and individual need, combined with the realization that the budget figure coincides with both. Cutback? To some it's a curse, to others a blessing.

Gerry Finn