

Comparative Criticism

By A. E. LUNDSTROM, Greenkeeper,
St. Charles Country Club, St. Charles, Illinois

FAIR criticism is just and constructive criticism, and invariably comes from minds that are familiar with the subject under consideration. Unfair and unjust criticism comes either through ignorance or personal motives, or both. By fair criticism I do not mean praise or flattery, but the expressed opinions of minds capable of logical reasoning, and with the knowledge and experience back of their reasoning, that is to say, minds that can and do compare conditions with conditions, and who understand their subject thoroughly.

How very often have we heard criticisms that do not contain the slightest element of justice, and simply because the critic is not at all familiar with the subject he ventures to criticise; hasty, thoughtless, if not downright ignorant; and how often in connection with the greenkeeper's work and profession. The reason is not far to seek. Few men, indeed, possess the experience and knowledge to cope with the hundred and one problems that arise, or the different conditions that must be taken into consideration in golf construction and maintenance, in order to be able to criticise fairly and justly.

If a greenkeeper is given the proper moral and financial backing and he fails to produce results, then he is at fault and should be severely criticised; but how many of our clubs do really give their greenkeepers such moral and financial support, even if they have the right kind of a man?

Unsound Basis of Comparison

How often have we heard club members comparing their own course to some other course, and the other course is praised to the skies? Perhaps they never for a moment stop to consider that "the other" club has spent two or three times the amount of money for upkeep; that the other club has more suitable soil conditions; that the other club has spent thousands of dollars more for drainage and water system, plus sand, soil and fertilizers, and has every modern piece of machinery with which to do the work properly, whereas their own unfortunate club is minus on most of these items. And yet they will compare the two clubs as the judges do the pigs at the stock show, and invariably the poor greenkeeper "gets his." What's the answer?

Theory Manages Many Clubs

One doesn't expect a cobbler to be a good horseshoer simply because he handles shoes, nor should one expect the doctor, the dentist, the lawyer and the groceryman to

know very much about golf work, or the amount of labor a man can do; still it is men of this class who more often than not control the destinies of the average golf club, dictate its policies, and decide on every vital question, even as to how work should be done, and very seldom with anything but mere theories to base their opinions on. Lucky is the greenkeeper who has a Green committee that really knows what the work is, and understands the business thoroughly.

Young Golf Clubs Suffer "Growing Pains"

During the time that the average club passes through the usual experimental stage, which often runs into years, the destinies and policies of that club are usually in the hands of men who have not the slightest idea of what the future holds in store, elected to their offices on account of being successful in their particular line, but with no training or knowledge whatever in golf construction or club management. Outside of golf where could be found a group or association of shrewd business men who would entrust two or three hundred thousand dollars worth of property, and often more, to a small committee of inexperienced men?

The average new club starts off with a bang, and spends money more than lavishly. They must have a club house immediately, one that outshines anything for miles around, even if notes must be given for its fancy trimmings. But notes have an unhappy way of falling due in time, and if the membership campaign hasn't been a howling success, then the question arises: "What are we to do?"

Radical Cuts in Course Maintenance

The doctor, the dentist, the lawyer and the groceryman put their wise heads together, and with great business acumen decide to trim the "over-head" expenses, as all good efficiency experts do, and the greenkeeper and the workmen are the first, and generally the only ones, to suffer. It is out of the question to stint on the club house expenditures, even though there is a monthly deficit there, for "what would the ladies say if we didn't maintain the social standard and pace previously set?"

Men are laid off from the comparatively small force, and necessary improvements stop. The previously well groomed course begins to look ragged, and even the grass loses its deep, fine color; weeds creep in; sand traps are untouched; and top-dressing comes only at ir-

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regular intervals. And now Comparative Criticism begins to show its ugly and unjust head in earnest!

Experience Counts on Club Committees

Many clubs that have labored under this condition have seen the error of their ways and in due time have rectified them, for they have learned that grass cutting and watering is but a fraction of the work necessary, and that it takes money, time, perseverance and foresight to create and maintain a course that can be compared to the best. And invariably the best and most successful clubs have on their committees men with years of experience and with broad vision—men who positively know what they ought to receive in return for a dollar.

When the conscientious and competent greenkeeper's best efforts are appreciated he may go home tired, but contented, and through such contentment he will be able to store physical and mental energy in sound sleep, enabling him to overcome greater obstacles that would perhaps be neglected otherwise. Appreciation of work well done will surely react in the form of an intelligent enthusiasm that will be felt all down the line, from the chairman of the Green committee to the night waterman, and will make the humble greenkeeper feel glad that he has chosen greenkeeping as his life work.

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