

The Golf Course Worker— His Relations With the Membership

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WHENEVER the situation exists that two persons on the same property are pursuing different objectives there is every chance for friction unless each employs a great deal of tact and judgment. In the member-worker relationship of the golf course set-up several touchy situations can arise because the member in one sense is the employer—the golf course worker the employee; the member is out for pleasure—the employee is there to work; the employee of necessity uses equipment that is noisy—the golfer wants quiet. These and numerous other matters, similarly extreme, could and do arise which make it imperative that there be some rules and regulations, defined or understood, as a basis for relations between the worker and the member. The worker receives his instruction from the Golf Course Superintendent; the member normally through various responsible committees. The golf course set-up is like most other organisations in that there are normal channels of authority that each should pursue in working toward any objective. The channels of authority are clearly defined and though they might vary slightly from club to club, they usually follow from the President to the Board of Governors to the Committees to the Chairmen, to the Superintendent to the employee. These channels of authority should be followed. Otherwise, embarrassing or serious consequences could result.

Glasshouse

The golf course employee works in a "house of windows," as large as all outdoors, in full view of the membership. From this it is easy for a member to gain a false impression of a worker's ability. It is natural but not altogether sound to draw firm conclusions from fleeting glances of an employee's habits. The point we wish to make here is that the member should not take it upon him-

self to judge an employee's performance. The Superintendent in charge knows what it takes to complete each and every assignment. If the employee is not producing, the Superintendent unquestionably will be the first to know it.

We take for granted that each, the member and the worker, will abide by the rules of common courtesies of our society—being polite and considerate in any request that is necessary to make of one another. Such is not always the case and this, we feel, is to some degree due to a lack of true knowledge of the other's objective. On the one hand the member should know a little about the amount of work that goes into the upkeep of the course. For example, putting greens are mowed 4 to 7 times weekly. Many a golfer assumes that greens are mowed only on the one day that he plays the course. The member often asks "Why must the greens be aerated at a time when greens are just about perfect for putting?" The average member is not really interested in the why. He usually asks the question without expecting an answer—it is often a way of showing his displeasure at the interference with his day's putting—his day of golf.

Well Trained Workers Smile

Another opportunity for friction arises when workmen are applying chemical treatment to a green while one foursome after another plays through. Many chemicals are dangerous or unpleasant to use because they blister or irritate skin and nasal passages. A worker with some of this chemical in his lungs, eyes, and on his skin because of strong shifting winds isn't exactly in a splendid frame of mind when asked to step aside for several foursomes. However, the well trained worker will manage a smile and accommodate the member because he, too, wishes to be co-operative and mannerly. Workmen take pride in the condition of the golf course, and their main concern always is to see the job through.

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On the other hand, the golfer is out for a day's pleasure. He wants only to be able to concentrate on his game, and to score better this round than he did on his last. He wants no one around to interfere with his concentration, or to slow him up, or to in any way detract from the pleasure of his day at the course. If the worker doesn't know golf, he may not be aware that such things as walking or talking or motioning unnecessarily, or standing in the line of putt, could be disturbing to the golfer. The worker should know the game, but if he does not, the superintendent has a responsibility to school each new worker in the simple etiquette of golf.

With the increase in play today, the superintendent must, if at all possible, gear his maintenance programme to interfere as little as possible with play and to stay ahead of golfers. This is becoming increasingly more difficult because even on private courses play now begins very early each day, and workers are hard pressed to stay out of the way of golfers. It is difficult to plan for efficiency when golfers make such heavy use of the course; a great percentage of the time is lost in working around the players.

Little Extras

In the search for total harmony there are numerous things that the worker can do over and above the usual that would be helpful and greatly appreciated by the member. These would require consideration rather than extra time on the worker's part.

1. The worker might carry a few extra scorecards and pencils for forgetful members.
2. The worker might carry an extra golf ball or two to replace one inadvertently destroyed by equipment. The extra golf balls could be some of those found by employees during the course of their work.
3. Workers should report telephone calls to members on the course as soon as possible.
4. If a rain or electric storm breaks out, the worker could report the

players' locations so the superintendent can arrange to pick them up quickly.

5. If a worker finds a club, he should try to return it immediately or place it in a conspicuous place where the searching caddie could easily find it.

Common Complaints

From the playing point of view, in addition to good turf there are several things the members desire, most of them minor; however, the game of golf being greatly psychological, minor items tend to take on major proportions if endlessly deferred. Here are some items that most frequently cause complaint:

1. Tees are not level, not smooth.
2. Tee markers are not moved often enough—grass cover too sparse.
3. Tee markers are placed too close to one another.
4. Tee markers are not squared away with the correct line of flight.
5. Pin placements are unfair at times.
6. Pin placements (cups) are moved too infrequently. Grass is sparse around cups or long and scraggly at perimeter of cup.
7. Cups not replaced properly—sometimes too low, or too high, or too near the last cup placement.
8. Greens bumpy—not perfectly true.
9. Too much grain, mat, or thatch in greens.
10. Greens too soft or too hard—ball marks numerous and repaired badly.
11. Traps raked inadequately or not at all.
12. Traps edged improperly or unfairly—traps constructed so that they restrict backswing are most unfair.
13. Roughs too lush near edge of fairways.
14. Roads through course too numerous—made by constant traffic or course equipment.
15. Clean towel for ball washers not replaced often enough.

In return, the worker asks primarily for understanding and appreciation from the membership which frequently

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is reflected in the way the member conducts himself on the course. If the member is careless in littering the course, in dragging his feet over greens, in burning greens with cigarettes, in taking divots unnecessarily, in failing to repair ball-marks, in recklessly walking through traps, in driving electric cars in restricted areas and numerous other minor but thoughtless acts, then the worker can only interpret these to mean his efforts are not appreciated.

The Small Extras

It's the small extras that make the big difference in this relationship. It's the co-operation on the part of every individual concerned that helps make the outstanding course. None of the items mentioned are severe matters in themselves, but in total they play an important part of the overall member-worker relationship.

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