

WHY KEEP RECORDS?

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The most obvious reason for a golf course superintendent to keep records is that of enabling him to account to the members of his club for *their* money which he has expended in the process of maintaining *their* golf course. This alone is reason enough for adequate records. It is the club's property. It is their money. The members have a right to know how their money was spent and what was accomplished through its expenditure.

There are many additional dividends to be gained from the keeping of adequate records. Good records help the superintendent to gauge the effectiveness of his operations, to accurately estimate costs of future work, to prepare a sound budget, to be able to predict machinery and equipment replacement needs, to evaluate the performance of men and equipment, and to compare maintenance costs with others (on a valid basis).

Measuring Effectiveness of Work Done

The turf around trees near tees and alongside fairways has been nicely trimmed and provides a pleasing appearance. Most club members like it that way and usually no questions are asked. But suppose an economy-minded member inquires about the cost of this trimming. He is entitled to know. Can you give him the answer?

There is some evidence of grub damage on fairways. This damage will not be excessive but it could be cleared up completely with an application of a soil insecticide. Is it worth the cost of treatment now or should the operation be postponed until next year? How much will it cost for materials and for application? The answer to the first question must be based upon one's budget position and the attitude of his club with respect

to standard of maintenance. It is a question of judgment. The second question is one of fact, however, and can be answered rather precisely on the basis of records kept in the past.

Grass in fairways is growing rapidly. Clippings are so heavy they are lying on top of the turf. They are unsightly and they stick to one's shoes when they are wet with dew. Why have these clippings become so heavy? Has rainfall been heavier than normal? Has the night irrigation man been spending more time than usual on the fairways? How much fertiliser was applied? When? Good records will provide this information and perhaps give a clue to the factors contributing to the excessive growth.

There is excessive *Poa annua* in the collars of greens—more than in other years. Could a weed control treatment, which eliminated some existing vegetation, have coincided with the period of *Poa annua* germination? Or was there a severe disease attack which thinned the bent at a critical period? Records may reveal the reason for the excessive *Poa annua*. Memories often are so faulty as to be unreliable in one's efforts to recall dates and events of such a nature.

Frequently, the Green Section agronomist asks a superintendent a question such as, "When did you last apply insecticide for sod webworm control?". The answer may be, "Oh, about 3 weeks ago". Upon checking records it is frequently found that the elapsed time is much greater. Memories just cannot be completely trusted during a busy, hectic season. Only a written record which can be referred to during a less busy season can be the basis for an analysis of the effectiveness of one's activities.

Estimate Costs of Future Work

Records of labour and material requirements for routine operations permit precise estimates of costs of performing this or similar work in the future. Suppose, for instance, that a club wishes to establish a different grass on fairways. During the golfing season it may be possible to maintain bluegrass satisfactorily with two mowings per week, whereas, bermuda-grass which requires closer cutting and which grows during the summer months may require four mowings per week. How much more time will be required? Will presently owned mowing equipment be sufficient to take care of the problem? Will a new tractor be needed?

It may be decided that fairways should be aerified more frequently, that flagstick positions be changed twice daily, that sand traps be raked more frequently, that divots in tees be repaired and top-dressed daily, or that new towels on ball washers be replaced more frequently. Conversely, it may be proposed that only the putting green should be sprayed with fungicide and that fringe areas be skipped in order to save money. The superintendent with complete facts at hand can answer all such proposals intelligently. He can predict the amount of savings in the latter case and perhaps forestall a decision that would prove to be false economy. In the case of increasing the frequency of some maintenance operations, he can accurately estimate the increased costs and committee members may not wish to provide this amount of money for the improved conditions.

Budget Planning

It is virtually impossible to plan intelligently and accurately a budget for a future year's operations unless records of former operations are available. Labour costs may change, but experience in other years with respect to labour requirements by hours are helpful in figuring costs. Thus, hours required multiplied by current or foreseeable labour costs will provide a very accurate prediction for budget purposes.

A budget which is prepared realistically should take into account the depreciation rates of equipment. A budget item for equipment replacement should be inserted annually so that major items of capital expense are spread over a number of years rather than being shown on a single year's budget. It is distressing to find that some clubs not only fail to provide for depreciation but do not have an up-to-date inventory which shows the remaining useful life and estimated value of equipment owned. Costs of supplies can be estimated with fair accuracy by studying the invoices or purchase orders from past years. In the case of fungicides and insecticides it is well to maintain a supply of materials on hand even though sizable quantities must be carried from one year's inventory to the next. More accurate estimates of material needs may be made by referring to records of weather conditions, disease incidence, severity of insect attacks, etc. If quantities of materials used can be related to the conditions prevailing during the season, such information is more valuable than a total figure which simply expresses costs of materials used.

Comparing Costs

It has been said frequently that comparisons between golf courses cannot be made. Regardless of the validity of the statement, comparisons will continue to be made. If records are accurate and detailed, some comparisons are possible and in some cases they may be helpful.

For instance, two clubs may compare the average time required for mowing an acre of fairway or to rake 1,000 square feet of sand trap or to cultivate 1,000 square feet of putting green. It may be helpful to know that a seven unit gang mower allows one superintendent to easily mow his fairways three times a week with one tractor, whereas his neighbour, operating with a five unit gang cannot get over his golf course in the same length of time.

Finding Maintenance Weaknesses

It is frequently the case that the membership of a club is not overly critical of

the conditions existing on a golf course. While superintendents may dream of this kind of membership, it is not a good situation because without the benefit of golfers' criticism and comment, a superintendent may fall into a maintenance routine that neglects some feature of the course.

Recently one superintendent found in going over his records that he had spent hardly anything for tee repair, ball washers, and towels. His records immediately revealed to him a matter that he had overlooked on the course and one about which his players had not complained. He immediately undertook a programme of regularly servicing ball washers and repairing tees. This situation may seem unusual, but it happens more frequently than most of us realise. It is often difficult to see ourselves. When records can help reveal such weaknesses they perform a real service.

Kinds of Records

Records systems may be simple or complicated and they may consume little or much time. The dislike of a complicated, time-consuming system has

deterred many from keeping anything like complete records.

The simplest and most desirable is a daily diary. If routine operations as well as special jobs are recorded and weather conditions noted, this diary together with payroll records and invoices for materials purchased will provide the basic information needed by the superintendent.

Because of the fact that records hold a fascination for many people, it is easy to progress to certain other types of records that will provide useful information.

Complete records do require a considerable amount of time. Those who have kept such records feel that they are well worth the trouble and time. They enable the superintendent to subject his operations to a constant, critical analysis. He can spot his weaknesses, he can precisely predict next year's costs, he can defend those maintenance tasks he believes to be important, he can recommend the elimination of costly course features which he believes to be unimportant, and finally, he can demonstrate his responsibility to the club by showing his membership exactly what he has done *for them with their money.*



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