

Greenkeepers Putting Golf on Business Basis

By A. D. PETERSON

UNTIL quite recently the very important position the greenkeeper fills was not generally realized by club officials. He was underpaid or not sufficiently well paid to make the profession of greenkeeping particularly attractive to ambitious men, neither those holding positions, nor the younger element wishing to enter a line of work giving promise of being not only interesting but offering fair remuneration as reward for honest effort and efficiency.

It is now recognized, however, that the greenkeeper is one of the most important cogs in the machinery of golf club management. He probably spends, or supervises directly or indirectly, the spending of 50 per cent of the total annual dues received by a club from its members. He can waste or misuse a very appreciable percentage of club funds, or he can fill his position conscientiously and efficiently as most greenkeepers do today—protecting in every possible way the interest of the club.

Largely through habit formed in the past when their position was not properly appreciated there still are greenkeepers who expect commissions or gratuities of some kind on purchases which they influence. But this type is very much in the minority and with the coming of greenkeepers' associations, guided by honest and intelligent officers, they are bound, eventually, either to adjust their ideas or disappear entirely from the field.

If a competent greenkeeper is to be held responsible for results, he should not be interfered with in his work. He should be the judge of the various materials, equipment, etc., which he uses, for his experience has taught him to know value received. Being fair, he also realizes that the dealer in golf course supplies is entitled to a legitimate margin of profit, and those soliciting golf course business whose slogan is "price alone," cannot long meet the just demand for honest quality and service.

Golf Buying No "Game"

The past few years have been a period of readjustment which was inevitable with the tremendous growth of golf and the constantly enlarged field for business with golf

clubs—business which now runs into several million dollars per annum. As a result there is the keenest sort of competition. Golf, until a few years ago, was only a game, and those responsible for purchasing supplies apparently also considered this function as a game. But now it has become a business, and rightly so, considering the amount of money involved—and greenkeepers promoting an interchange of ideas will do much towards establishing an equitable trading basis.

Unfortunately a happy medium in purchasing generally has not yet been struck. Too frequently club officials have gone from one extreme to another—from careless laxity to practices of downright perniciousness and lack of sound judgment in striving for economy. They have gained just sufficient knowledge in many cases to make its value very questionable, but a greens committee fortified with the services of a trustworthy and efficient greenkeeper, cannot go far astray in properly performing its duties. And as the functioning of greenkeepers' associations continues to improve, fewer mistakes will be made and less money wasted in all matters pertaining to the maintenance of our golf courses.

It is interesting to note the influence of the Westchester Greenkeepers' association during the past year. A large percentage of Westchester greenkeepers have a keen interest in its affairs. The greenkeepers in this association make sure that their clubs purchase supplies and equipment of the right quality at the right price, and the earnest endeavor shown to keep their own course in a little better condition than the one nearby at a little lower cost, should be a source of genuine gratification to the greens committee chairman.

Monthly and special meetings are held by the Westchester association, and on these occasions different methods pertaining to golf course maintenance and construction are discussed as well as the results which the association members are getting from various supplies and equipment. In addition, papers are read by members on subjects designated by a director of lectures.

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Realizing the progress being made by this body, the greenkeepers in other sections of the Metropolitan district became interested and decided the movement should broaden. As a result a Long Island Greenkeepers' association and a New Jersey Greenkeepers' association have now been formed and also a Metropolitan Greenkeepers' association, governed by officials chosen from each of the three sectional associations; the idea of this Metropolitan Greenkeepers' association being for the combined expression and unity of ideas.

In addition to the Metropolitan associations just mentioned, there are in the East, the Greenkeepers' Association of New England and the Greenkeepers' Association of Philadelphia, all of them, I believe, striving for the same ultimate principles—not alone the proper recognition of their profession, but to constantly improve the efficiency of golf course maintenance and construction, leading to economical club management and the kind of protection and fair competition which all honest dealers in seed, fertilizer, equipment and other golf course supplies desire.

Much has been written during the past two years about reducing the cost of golf and many theories advanced to bring this about, such as co-operative purchasing bureaus, etc., but in my opinion the formation of greenkeepers' associations throughout the country, providing they are directed in a sane and level-headed manner, should prove the really practical plan.

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