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# Golfdom

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## Year's Advance in Golf Is Surveyed

By *HERB GRAFFIS*

FROM November first to the middle of the following January more than half of the U. S. golf clubs hold their annual elections, according to GOLFDOM'S records.

With the turn-over in official labor as heavy as it is, this means that the coming 10 weeks will see the bumper crop of proud hopefuls coming into office and starting from scratch to govern operations at their clubs. In some cases specific and comprehensive annual reports will help the newcomers to get off on the right foot. In too many cases the incoming administration will experiment with the club's operation and the club's money until the new officials learn "what it's all about" and then will come the next annual election and another line-up of eager and ambitious experimenters. Small wonder that golf clubs are having trouble getting on a business basis.

If clubs can get officials who are competent and who have that noble temperament that reconciles itself to the onerous details of an unpaid club position, they'd better keep them.

There is a marked tendency toward re-election of satisfactory and satisfied officials. Already the election returns coming into GOLFDOM show that this movement, which spurted last year, continues.

This continuance in office of right officials seems to us to be one of the brightest signs in the extension of business methods in golf, so it's a proper lead for a review of the high-spots of the season's developments in the business end of the game.

The tendency toward smaller and more energetic directorates also seems plain. Apparently Henry Ford was right in his recent statement that the usual board of directors actually consists of one man.

In our opinion, if a club can get a small directorate of men who really will direct, the only excuse for having a big board of directors is the necessity of "salving" a number of groups in the club's membership.

### An Executive Committee

On this matter of executive line-up on a business-like basis, I am impressed with the idea of H. M. Crane, president of the Nassau Country club. Mr. Crane says:

"It seems to me that an executive committee, consisting of the president, secretary and treasurer and the chairmen of the grounds committee and house committee would be very desirable in club management. Such a committee could co-ordinate the large expenditures of the club in a way difficult to do where they are under the control of several different committees reporting only to the board of governors."

At several clubs I have heard of a complete mimeographed report of the monthly directors' meetings being mailed out to the members. This strikes me as a development along the right line for very few of the average club's members have any idea of the problems of the club or of its financial status until the end of the season when it's too late to do any good or correct any misunderstandings.

The problem of the non-supporting member, which came to light this year as the

reason for the financial plight of many golf clubs, began to get tackled in earnest. GOLFDOM'S articles on this subject were of such interest that more than 21,000 reprints of editorial material were ordered by golf clubs to be mailed out by the clubs to their members.

Whether the answer to the non-supporting member problem lies within the club or entirely with the uninterested member is something to be seriously considered by a good many administrations between now and the opening of the 1929 season. Is the condition of the course uninviting? Is the clubhouse without any particular attraction? Is the entertainment program "the same old stuff"? Is the food just so-so, the prices out of line, and the service nothing to brag about? Would more members be necessary to provide the right financial program? Details of this character got increasing study during the 1928 season and everywhere they were considered, the club's finances got started on the way to improvement, according to the letters and interviews we have had.

### Clubhouse Design

During the year we have had a good many letters asking us to put golf clubs in touch with architects specializing on clubhouses. So far as we have been able to learn "there ain't no sech animule." Architects generally, according to plans we have seen and inspections we have made of a number of new clubhouses, are getting the major points of clubhouse architecture in better shape. You see some space and ventilation in the kitchens of the new clubhouse. You see elasticity provided in the dining-rooms and kitchens for "over-flow" crowds. The pro finally is getting a "break" in having his shop located and laid out so he stands a chance of providing convenient and business-like service to his members. The tremendous growth of women's play has meant that many clubs have had to remodel their clubhouses to provide adequate women's bath, locker and lounge quarters. The female factor is getting stronger in golf every day. Watch it grow as well as make it a valuable detail in your own club's progress. One place where the architects for the most part have muffed their opportunities is in allowing practically all of the new locker-rooms to look like tiers of cells in the county jail. Now and then a genius comes through with something in keeping with the spirit (or should we say something else?) of the

locker room, but 98 out of a hundred of them still are just four walls, some steel and some benches.

In the smaller towns there is a demand for clubhouses that not only will serve the club privately but be available for revenue producing as a place for select social gatherings. Some rather promising progress has been shown along this line, and in making charm and individuality pinch-hit in the place of the money that the large city clubs put into their clubhouses.

I have seen and heard what I consider significant evidences of the fact that many clubs are beginning to realize that the costly clubhouse is something to be guarded against, unless the club can afford an extravagance. There is no denying the fact that the clubhouse of the average metropolitan club is more or less a frozen asset, and so dangerously near a necessary liability that the investment should be such that the establishment will have the correct proportions of attractiveness, utility and distinctiveness without burdensome interest or maintenance charges.

### Greenkeeping Developments

I must hand the greenkeepers credit for lots of progress this year. I won't go shooting off roman-candles and putting another layer of gilt on the office halo for the greenkeeping end on this page, for the eminent Mr. Leach has batted the bearings out of his typewriter doing that with the result shown elsewhere in this issue. But it must be admitted the efforts of the greenkeepers to get their department of the business operating along an efficient and scientific basis is an outstanding feature of the year's development in golf.

The greenkeeper with his curious combination of the notoriously individualistic temperaments of the artist, the farmer and the scientist, is a funny bird, according to the confession you can pry readily from the green-chairman. This year he has concerned himself with study of cost-keeping, fertilization, labor handling, machinery, and fairway watering to an extent that gives positive promise of eventual remarkable economy in maintenance costs. When this economy will be reaped is hard to tell for as John MacNamara, a prominent greenkeeper, pointed out in these columns some months ago, every time a greenkeeper saves a dime the standards of maintenance advance and there goes the dime—and some more.

This year we have seen the development

of cost-keeping systems that are really practical. Instead of showing just so much money spent, and where, they show the expenses in a way that prevents wastes and draws attention to neglected details. In the smaller towns, probably more than in the metropolitan areas, this cost-keeping progress is vitally important, although at no place is it to be slighted. We recently have seen some really accurate figures on compost preparation, and they made us blink, just as they did the green-chairman and greenkeepers of the clubs compiling them. The aggregate of these costs showed that other fertilization methods and the employment of machinery were urgently warranted.

With the labor payroll accounting for approximately 70% of the average annual green-maintenance expense, it is obvious that the savings to be expected must come from replacement of manual labor by machinery. Power mower development has advanced decidedly during the last twelve months and plenty of attention is being devoted by manufacturers to further progress in this direction.

Fairway watering continues to grow. California's pioneering in fairway watering, born of necessity, swept eastward first as a luxury, and now is becoming recognized as a necessity for the first class courses farther east. The hoseless watering installations also are growing in favor, and are showing marked labor savings. Architecture continues to take maintenance into more studious consideration and the courses put in during the past season show great ingenuity in permitting machine maintenance without sacrifice of the golfing or landscape elements.

Around five or six years ago there was the period of greatest activity in new course construction in metropolitan districts. Many of these new courses were put in on land that the farmers had allowed to run down in fertility due to the obvious opportunities for sale for golf or subdivision purposes. Heedless construction methods at many of these courses further aggravated this situation because what good top-soil there was present got buried in moving dirt for the greens. Consequently the approach areas were sadly scalped. Greenkeepers have been reaping this whirlwind ever since. Though it has been a costly harvest it has not been without profit for it has resulted in a deeper study of fertilization programs, the appraisal of soil fertility in selecting sites

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## PLAN FEE COURSE OWNERS' CONFERENCE

WITH fee course growth continuing at a lively gait and that phase of the golf business already of substantial dimensions, the fee course owners are beginning to recognize the probability of considerable value to be derived from exchange of ideas.

The owner of one of the high-grade fee courses in the middle west has written GOLFDOM suggesting that we organize a convention of central and western daily fee course owners to be held during the Golf Show at Chicago and an eastern meeting to be held during the New York show.

There's no glory or money in it for us, but we shall be glad to do our level best in promoting such sessions and helping in arranging a practical program if the manifest interest of daily fee course owners warrants action.

The idea looks good to us, for fee course owners have a lot of special problems that ought to be considered specifically by sessions such as those suggested.

GOLFDOM would like to hear from fee course owners as to their thought on this matter, and if they are for a conference, we would appreciate being advised of any practical program ideas that occur to them.

HERB GRAFFIS,  
Editor.

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for new courses, and stricter specifications governing the construction methods employed in new course building.

Brown-patch prevention and cure during the last season has received more attention than ever before. As to a definite determination of the cause of brown-patch the authorities still differ and differ plenty, just as they differ on the best methods of prevention and cure.

One of this writer's regrets of the past season is that the crowded condition of his touring schedule did not permit a visit to see the results that A. P. Webster obtained at Rock Island, Ill., with the generally discarded Bordeaux mixture. Although this treatment has passed out of the picture as

a general rule, Mr. Webster, green-chairman at Rock Island, and agronomist of good standing and experience, stoutly maintains that too hasty adverse judgment was passed on it.

Arsenate of lead took the spotlight in extending its field of application, and although new in its employment in many parts of the country, received a big play as a result of B. R. Leach's articles in GOLFDOM. Mr. Leach, who sponsored and continues to serve as the arch-protagonist of this material, maintains that his extensive work with it indicates it to be of tremendous value to golf turf culture.

The past season has seen bent seed coming into decided popularity. Other factors of the year's progress that are especially noteworthy are the experimental plots (both those privately conducted and those conducted under the green section auspices associated with local organizations) and drainage. Wonders are being worked with improved drainage, and it is to be expected that 1929 will see impetus given to this important detail of construction and maintenance.

### Pros Push for Place in Sun

Out of the maze of bewilderment in which the pro has groped during the period that his status changed from that about of a club retainer of only casual importance to that of a substantial business man with fairly good sized retailing interests and professorial responsibilities toward sportsmen and sportswomen who took to their new enthusiasm with blazing intensity. The entire picture changed for the pros in a few years and it was to be expected that readjustment would require some time, especially in view of the fact that the great growth of the game brought some men into pro jobs who were without qualifications.

The pros and their association have quietly conducted a house-cleaning. There is an insistence upon good business practice and good credit standing that would do high credit to many a long established business made up of units doing far greater business than the average pro shop does. Remarkable improvement has been registered during the past season in the pro credit situation and in the merchandising study and results of the professionals.

One of the problems the pro has to contend with is lack of understanding of his situation by club officials and members. We seldom hear of a case of a pro who

really is making the net income his members credit him with. He is often the "millionless-millionaire" of the club and for that reason there was a move for clubs to take over the shop concessions gaining headway up to a couple of years ago. It was not to be wondered at, with the clubs running in the red and grasping at every opportunity for profit. The swing is the other way now for the clubs soon found that pro shop operation was not all peaches and cream and profit. They also found that to attract a pro who was a substantial asset to the club the inducement of whatever shop profit could be made was necessary in addition to the usual nominal salary of the professional.

Amazing development has been witnessed in bettered selling and display facilities and methods in pro shops this year. The pros are paying attention to their book-keeping, buying and to thoughtful and tactful sales policies. The great interest women took in golf this year has been a bonanza for pros. It is certain to increase.

Within their own ranks the pros are seriously considering the development of their Professional Golfers' association's facilities and functions in keeping with the broadened requirements of the times. Pro thought on this subject has received considerable space in recent issues of GOLFDOM.

The highly important matter of more effective golf instruction is getting some intensive study from the leaders in professional golf. The balance between instruction, sales activities and tournament play has come to the front during the past season as another subject for serious contemplation.

### Manager's Job Bigger

Among the trends that has caused the manager's worry during the past season is the growth of the suspicion that it might not be necessary to run the house at a loss, the practice to which the majority of metropolitan district clubs, at least, have been reconciled.

With the officials riding the manager to show a profit, and with memberships that are too small in many cases to yield a volume that will show black figures regardless of how the weather may or may not favor him, about the one bright ray of hope is the intense activity in women's bridge parties. Rain or shine they go on,

(Continued on Page 38)



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In addition to Chairman Burkhardt the show committee consists of Louis M. Evans, John MacGregor, John Morley, Emil Loeffler, David L. Rees and Al Schardt.

Officials of the organization are satisfied that all space will be sold quickly. Arrangements are being perfected for a program that will arouse a lively buying interest and give the exhibitors a splendid run for their money.

The program committee is at work on a line-up that will present as speakers prominent authorities in greenkeeping and covering a wide range of the important and practical subjects of value in the maintenance and construction of golf-courses.

### YEAR'S ADVANCE SURVEYED

(Continued from Page 8)

and draw big crowds if the menus and arrangements are enticing.

Back of the house the managers have shown development during the past year along lines that are strictly country-club rather than groping adaptations of hotel and restaurant practice.

The manager's responsibility is being broadened for, if he stands in the way he should with a first class club, he is being entrusted with details of the house business development campaign. This is but the beginning, for if he makes good in this respect he finds himself a candidate for the general management of the club, a title and a duty that has been getting a great play during the past couple of years. On paper the general management looks fine and one of the outstanding needs of the manager's group is the development of men to fill this sort of a job. One of the troubles of the plan in actual practice is that the element of diplomacy is neglected in the relations with the outside execu-

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tives, the professional and the greenkeeper. The general manager has to be pretty much of a genius and a real diplomat if he is an inside man and can handle his job without incurring the veiled, if not active, enmity of the outside men, who may consider that he is "bossing" them without knowing about their province. Unfortunately this peril is not as infrequent as it should be and the general manager, as a result, finds himself in wrong all around. It has been our observation that the general manager plan has bumped into the rocks more on this account than for any other reason.

A good part of the manager's trouble has been concerned with the matter of housing the employes. It is interesting to note that the plans of the new clubs built during the past season in metropolitan areas have provided for help quarters.

In the small towns the manager has an entirely different set-up. His wife may have active charge of the back-of-the-house operations. She may even take a hand in the book-keeping to bear out the old saying that "women's work is never done." The nominal manager has the job of making the clubhouse show a real profit, one that will not only pay the operating charges, but the carrying charges and amortize the investment. The building of better clubhouses that are suitable for social centers of the highest type for the community seems to be the significant feature of smaller town operations this year.

This matter of utilization of clubhouses to a greater extent is giving the managers in the city territories food for thought. Many of them apparently think that the ideal to be attained is a clubhouse that will attract year-round use. We may see the new clubhouse as one with a practice putting green and swimming pool under glass, handball courts, practice nets and other winter sport facilities. If the location of the clubhouse and the character of the membership is such that a year-round club might be operated at a profit, this type of a clubhouse may come sooner than we now imagine.

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