

Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

Golfdom

THE BUSINESS JOURNAL OF GOLF

SEPTEMBER, 1928



Far Better Than the Average Small Town Clubhouse Is This Home of the Stafford Country Club, Serving the Golfers of Three Neighboring Small Towns With Facilities of Metropolitan Standard

We Got Away from Our Mistakes Early

By SCHUYLER C. WELLS

President, Stafford (N. Y.) Country Club

PAY as you go and then the question of meeting the regular running expenses that seem to be such a problem in the articles on "Who Pays" will be no problem at all.

It is my observation that the average country club is started on 75 per cent enthusiasm and 25 per cent cash, which results in either a half-baked layout which is unattractive if a debt is to be avoided or an annual interest charge if a good course is constructed. I don't know which is worse. The first finds it hard to attract members because it has nothing to offer, while the second finds it neces-

sary to inflict high dues and assessments to keep going.

The Stafford Country club started out true to form on the 75-25 plan, but before considering Stafford I would like to point out that there are two distinct types of clubs; the first, located in or near large centers where property values are constantly rising, has a full membership and a long waiting list composed of people who do not object to high dues or reasonable assessments. Clubs of this sort, which are largely social, cause no particular worry. The other class, however, comprises that large crowd of which Staf-

ford is one, located in a small community where men of limited means make up the bulk of the membership and where the annual expenditure of a member because of the club is many times the determining factor whether a man feels he can join.

The Stafford Country club is located at Stafford, N. Y., midway between the thriving small city of Batavia and village of Le Roy, with a combined population of 20,000. The idea of the club started, as is generally the case with clubs of this sort, with no real conception of what a club should be and with little thought of what it would cost to construct and maintain. The original layout called for a total expenditure of \$50,000—\$30,000 for land sufficient for eighteen holes and \$20,000 to construct nine holes after the plans of a local western New York architect and to cover the cost of certain minor changes to a farm house that was on the property. The financing was to be met by selling 200 transferable memberships at \$150 each, and a mortgage on the property for the balance.

How Costs Were Raised

The scheme looked feasible until Walter J. Travis stepped into the picture and right there the whole proposition changed from an ordinary course of mediocre character and design to a real layout that is considered one of the most interesting and toughest in western New York. Bonds for \$60,000 to cover the cost of constructing the first nine holes, the installation of the water system and the building of a clubhouse, which Mr. Travis' plans made necessary, were sold to members and everything went along beautifully until it became evident that with an annual interest charge on bonds and floating indebtedness of \$4,000 per year, or \$20 per member, that dues would have to be raised. This was the second milestone in Stafford's development.

Increase in dues meant the elimination of a lot of good members who simply couldn't afford it. Hence it was proposed to go to the members and ask them to give what they could afford to retire this indebtedness. The money was raised after a lot of preliminary work, largely on the basis that we used during the war, of everyone giving according to his means and at the conclusion of the campaign a resolution was passed by the Board of Governors, setting up the policy of keeping out of debt and where improvements

or betterments were needed to raise the necessary money before spending it.

As an extra source of income the transfer privilege of a membership certificate was eliminated as far as it related to people joining after that date. This, while protecting those who had contributed to defray the club's indebtedness has gradually reduced the number of original membership certificates and hence has materially increased the income from new members.

The policy we have of keeping out of debt has worked admirably and so sold is the membership on the proposition that during the past year two campaigns have been put on, originating by the way in the membership themselves; first, to build a new men's locker house and construct new women's quarters, and second, a campaign to complete the second nine. These campaigns were undertaken by the Finance Committee only after an exhaustive survey by the board as to the need for the extensions and the probable increased cost of maintaining the second nine holes. This last item was thoroughly gone over and the necessary increase in initiation fees and dues was passed by the board and incorporated in the subscription papers so that the membership might know exactly what they were in for should they elect to subscribe the money for these extensions. A total of \$50,000 has been raised in subscription notes, payable with interest in installments over two years. The clubhouse extension has been completed within the estimate which gives our members as fine locker facilities as I have ever seen in a small club, while construction work on the second nine is nearing completion, which assures play the latter part of next season on this part of the course.

Family Memberships

Initiation fees were raised from \$150 to \$200 and dues from \$60 to \$75 for resident and from \$25 to \$40 for non-resident, giving us an estimated increase of \$4,500 per year which would be ample to take care of our increased maintenance problems. These dues, by the way, as far as they relate to resident members, cover family memberships, so that there are no extras for a wife or non-supporting children, except a locker charge of \$8.00 per year should a member desire one, which just about covers the cost of locker expense. Our income from this source is approximately \$1,200 a year. Green fees are \$2.00

per day and while revenue from this source could be increased to large degree, we have not allowed play by outsiders except when accompanied or introduced by a member. Stafford has endeavored to set as high a standard as possible in locker, caddie, clubhouse and course maintenance. Drives and grounds have been laid out by a landscape architect and are kept in as good condition as the rest of the club property. Plans covering a ten-year planting program are under way, which when completed will give us a club and course, attractive, comfortable, homey and at dues that are reasonable.

Of course, it is true that Stafford has among its membership those who can and do give liberally, but the real success is due to the fact that the membership takes its part. Another cause and perhaps equally important is the time and real work that the Board of Governors have always given to club affairs. All construction work has been on a day basis rather than by contract. Material has been purchased at lowest prices direct from first hands, so that for every dollar spent there has been a good dollar's worth of results.

The governors, each of whom is the chairman of some committee, meets monthly, and there is scarcely a session that breaks up in less than four or five hours. Of course, the club is run on a budget plan and each governor is furnished before each meeting with the comparison of the expenditures of each committee as against that allowed in the budget.

Equipment Reduces Upkeep

Adequate machinery and equipment has materially reduced upkeep expenses. This includes at present a one ton dump truck, a light truck, a power compost machine, two Fordson tractors, a five unit gang mower and a three unit Ideal as well as other items found in the average club. It might be of interest to add that we use a five unit fairway mower for cutting the rough as we find it a great time saver.

The restaurant is run on the concession plan, the club paying the steward \$200 a month, which covers all services in the house and in turn he makes his profit on all meals served. This eliminates all possibility of a deficit in this part of the club, which so generally ends in red at the end of the season, and also does away with checking of purchases and other details which it is almost impossible to supervise unless a club manager is employed.

Caddies are given weekly instruction by

the professional or caddie-master, and because of the playing privileges they enjoy certain mornings each week and the big caddie tournament at the close of the season, this service, while not 100%, is yet on a par with most clubs as to quality and the number of caddies available.

Looks Ahead; Builds Right

Stafford has been successful largely because it has built a bridge before it attempted to cross the stream. At the "go in" it bought all the land necessary for future development. It has believed that real economy lay in buying the best whether it be engaging Mr. Travis for course architect, procuring the most modern course equipment or using softened water in the clubhouse in order to keep down plumbing repairs. The board believes in small dues, and to make this possible, the locker charge was instituted and dances run on the subscription basis rather than as a club expense, on the theory that those that use and enjoy these privileges should pay for them.

Plan ahead, eliminate the interest charges, give the membership as good or better than they can get elsewhere, use the most modern equipment, meet issues squarely which involve the spending of money over that allowed in the budget instead of passing the buck to the next year's board, and there will be little necessity for the discussion of "Who Pays."

"Games Wanted" Bulletin Is Locker-Room Feature

AT the Flossmoor Country club (Chicago District) there is a blackboard prominently displayed at the locker-room entrance. This is the "Games Wanted" bulletin on which any of the Flossmoor members who want games are to write their names. From this board many a foursome is filled out and because of it no member need worry about being without a game.

TO keep the dining-room and locker-room employes satisfied and on the job, it is advisable to establish a fund to be split at the end of the season among the workers on some fair basis, taking length of service and wages drawn into consideration. Raise the fund either by subscription among the members or by adding 10 per cent to all charge-tickets. The no-tipping rule should be rigidly enforced if an employes' fund is collected.