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What New Green-Chairman Is Up Against

By B. R. LEACH

"Advice is a peculiar commodity; wise men don't need it and jackasses won't take it as a gift." Musings of Marcus Aurelius.

A Letter to

Roscoe Binks.

Dear Roscoe:

How are the baked beans and codfish balls these snappy winter mornings up there in Boston? You know what the Englishman said when they served him codfish balls one Sunday morning at the old Parker House in Boston? Holding his nose and pointing to the codfish confection he said: "Waiter, waiter, there's something dead in the bun." He then ordered a stewed bloater, orange marmalade and strong tea, and made a very satisfactory breakfast.

However, all jesting aside, my dear Roscoe, I am writing you at this time because I find myself in a rather unusual position and wish your advice in order that I may conduct myself with that degree of aplomb which the world has learned to expect from a true son of dear old Harvard.

To paint the picture briefly, a month ago the members of my golf club elected me chairman of the green-committee and I



B. R. Leach

take office the first of the year. This job is of course a new departure as far as I am concerned and I have no hesitancy in admitting it has me guessing. There are some pretty gruesome stories going around regarding what happens to green-committee chairmen on occasion. A day or two ago I found an article in a magazine telling about a green-committee chairman who went cuckoo as a result of the cumulative effect of the vicissitudes he encountered. Do you suppose there is any degree of truth in this story? Life is so complex nowadays one can hardly know what to expect.

My wife happened to mention the other evening that you were green-chairman of your club. Women have marvelous memories. Of course, unfortunately, they always remember what you want them to forget. However, dear Roscoe, take your pen in hand and give me the dope on this green-committee business, so I won't commit any fox passes or rather fore paws if the Boston accent is correct.

Yours for better hair tonic,

MARMADUKE POTTS.

Roscoe Answers.

Dear Marmaduke:

Yours of the 12th to hand and contents noted. That wise-crack about the festive codfish is old stuff. It landed on Plymouth Rock with the Pilgrims. We are still very partial to the baked bean here in Boston but the codfish ball has rather more of an historic than contemporary significance.

You will pardon me for a moment dear Marmaduke while I enjoy a hearty laugh at the news of your election to the chairmanship of your green-committee. You, the pale-hand-pink-tipped scion of one of those slick Dutchmen who bought Manhattan Island from the Indians for a string of beads and a worn out red flannel undershirt; you, who never lifted anything heavier than a ticker tape, chosen to hold in your lily white hands the destiny of one veteran greenkeeper and a hundred acres of hand-tailored turf. You're going to need help, Marmaduke, or I miss my guess.

No doubt, if I considered the subject long enough, I could lay down 15 or 20 rules which if adhered to closely would enable the novice green-chairman to keep himself and his club out of trouble. But what's the use. You wouldn't pay any attention to them for the simple reason that you've got to learn for yourself. I can, however, give you the history of *my* experience as a green-chairman and, if you are half as smart as I think you are, you can read between the lines and govern yourself accordingly.

I was elected green-chairman of our club in 1912 and still hold the job. I have learned more about nature and human nature in the past fifteen years than I ever believed possible and I have no regrets. So you see, my dear Marmaduke, I have had a fair measure of experience in this green-committee business.

In the early years of my chairmanship, the job was not especially exacting or arduous. Our greenkeeper was a Scotsman named John McInnis, (he is still with us) and he knew his business. In those days, it wasn't the *fashion* for green-chairmen to pose as *amateur* greenkeepers. Green-keeping was considered a serious business, a profession in fact, and any smart aleck who undertook to interfere with an old-time Scotch greenkeeper soon got told where to head in. As a matter of fact, the greenkeepers of that day held the whip hand; the only way a chairman could find out anything about turf was by asking his

greenkeeper. You see there wasn't any Green Section in those days. Nevertheless we had some pretty good golf courses even if we didn't do everything in a scientific way.

Well, things moved along in a pretty well ordered groove until along about 1917 or so. Along about this time, a book was published dealing with fine turf grasses, written by two men named Piper and Oakley, technical men in the Department of Agriculture at Washington. I sometimes marvel at the way in which an apparently insignificant event can change the trend of an industry or profession almost overnight. Publication of this book by Piper and Oakley is a case in point. It certainly upset all the apple carts in the turf maintenance world.

As I have said previously, greenkeeping, up to this time, had been left to the greenkeepers. The members were interested primarily in the playing of the game itself. When this book appeared, however, it was widely read not only by the more progressive greenkeepers but also by golf club officials. Whatever subconscious intimations these individuals may have entertained with regard to the inefficiencies of the turf maintenance methods of that day were transformed to concrete certainties by a study of the various chapters of this book. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that the Green Section owes its inception to the publication of this volume by Piper and Oakley.

Along about 1920 the Green Section was organized and began to function. Piper, Oakley and Carrier began experiments with creeping bent and other grasses, understudied by Westover, Cunningham and Fitts. Monteith delved into the bottomless pit of turf disease control, and Leach got busy on the elimination of grubs and earthworms.

I don't suppose, my dear, Marmaduke, that you know very much about research men, or scientists, as they are sometimes called. They're queer birds, my boy, very queer birds. Furthermore they realize they're queer and don't give a dam. Give a real research man a knotty problem to play with and he straightway displays all the traits of a wirehaired fox terrier at a rat hole. In self-defense, you either choke him or help him get the rat.

You can just imagine what happened when they turned a flock of these bozos loose in the hitherto unexplored field of

turf maintenance. They just naturally mussed things up and got everybody excited. The Green Section *Bulletin* began to appear, containing articles by these research fellers advocating new methods of turf management. Right then and there many golf clubs faced what they felt to be a serious problem. Golf club officials wanted to put these new methods into operation or at least of giving them an extensive trial, but in most cases the greenkeepers were not so enthusiastic. The situation led to serious friction in many golf club organizations.

Now the greenkeepers of that period have often been criticised severely by the unthinking for the *apparently* intolerant, pigheaded and otherwise antagonistic attitudes they adopted toward these new developments in turf maintenance. But before any such stricture is leveled at a body of intelligent and useful citizens, it is well to bear in mind a few pertinent facts which I shall endeavor to make clear to you at this time. What I am about to say is the keynote of success or failure for the green-chairman. Ignore it and you'll be in hot water all the time. Remember it and you'll have the world by the tail.

Greenkeepers, in common with gardeners, farmers, and for that matter all men whose lives are spent in close contact with the soil are *individualists*. They do their own thinking and they'll keep right on doing it regardless of you, hell and high water or the czar of Russia. In addition greenkeepers as a class are instinctively cautious and conservative because the nature of their job makes them so. A golf green to them is not just something to putt on. To a greenkeeper, a green is comparable to a high-bred race horse, something to approach with proper reverence, something to be handled with gloves and loving care. It isn't something to monkey with. You think I'm getting mushy? Maybe so, but I know greenkeepers.

Under the circumstances I think you can visualize their reaction in the early days of turf research to these new methods. It was all Greek to them. They didn't understand these new departures (neither did the green-chairmen for that matter) and they hung back. You take a plantation mule that's been fed on corn all his life and give him a feed of oats and see what happens. Down goes his ears and up goes his heels thru the side of the stable. If you want to shift a mule from

corn to oats you've got to start out by giving him 95 per cent corn and 5 per cent oats. Then gradually reduce the proportion of corn and increase the proportion of oats but be very careful toward the end of the transition period to include a few kernels of corn with the oats for a considerable period of time. Otherwise, you won't get your cotton plowed.

Now this is exactly the procedure I adopted with our greenkeeper, John McInnis, during this the most trying period of transition in turf maintenance methods in the history of American golf. One Sunday morning I gave him the following hot shot:

"Now John, from what I can gather, you are one of the leading if not *the* leading greenkeeper in this section. I have always had the greatest admiration for you because you are not set in your ways. You're the leader of the greenkeepers in this section; the rest of these two-spot greenkeepers around here just naturally listen to what you say. Now when you're a leader in any form of endeavor you've got to keep three and a half jumps ahead of the mob or someone else gets the white meat.

"You know these technical lads have been publishing a lot of new stuff about turf lately. Maybe they know what they're talking about and, then again, maybe they're full of bull. If they're full of bull, someone will give them the 'bird' and the 'razzberry,' but if by the grace of God they happen to be right, you, as the leading greenkeeper of this neck of the woods, had better find it out first or your name'll be mud."

How's that for a diplomatic approach, Marmaduke? Oh yes, I concede that I'm very good at that sort of thing. Reminds me of the time the teacher asked the little boy the sum total of 4 and 6. The boy said "10." "Good," said the teacher. "Good, *Hell*," said the little boy, it's perfect."

Well, the upshot of it was that McInnis hot-footed it down to Washington and spent two days at the Arlington experimental turf garden: I learned afterward that McInnis spent the bulk of his time talking with the man who attended to the mowing, top-dressing, etc., of the experimental plots. This turf expert told McInnis he had finally come to the conclusion, after two years of association with the gang of long-winded technical sharks,

that most of the time they knew what they were talking about. Of course they made mistakes now and then, but they were pretty slick in covering up.

This was enough for McInnis. He returned from Washington in spirit a *modern* greenkeeper.

He warms a front seat at all the meetings of the Green Section and the National Association of Greenkeepers, takes GOLFDOM to bed with him, carries on a voluminous correspondence with the so-called turf experts of the nation and stands ace-high in his profession. More than that, he has labored with more than one erring greenkeeping brother, made him see the light and brought him safely back into the fold.

Well, Marmaduke, its after eleven and I'm tired. We old fellows have a tendency to be long winded and garrulous, but on the other hand I think it necessary that you have this historical background in order that you may approach your new duties as green-chairman with the proper degree of humility and not with that most loathsome of human poses—the superiority complex. You'll hear from me again shortly and I'll give you some more dope on this green-chairman business.

Yours for stuff right off the boat,
ROSCOE.

Augusta Strictly Business in Maintenance

By J. P. MULHERIN

Chairman Green-Committee, Augusta (Ga.)
Country Club

AUGUSTA COUNTRY CLUB maintains two eighteen-hole courses with grass greens and tees for play the entire year. One course accommodates the local players during six months, from May to November, but both courses are required to accommodate both local and visiting players during the winter, or what we term the tourist season, from November to April, inclusive.

We therefore have the problem of growing on the same greens both summer and winter grasses. However, it has been worked out so that the fairways, the greens and the tees are in splendid condition for summer and winter plays.

To do this, however, requires careful study and very competent help. We have a superintendent and he has an assistant.

The greens committee dictates the general policy for the upkeep and maintenance of the courses as well as the wage scale and the number of employes. The superintendent is placed in absolute control and is charged with the responsibility of maintaining the organization without interference of any kind. There are no favorites employed who might feel that some member of the green committee will look after him, and there is, therefore, no petty criticism and tale bearing which is so destructive of the proper morale in an organization—the superintendent is the responsible party and even the chairman of the green committee refrains from giving any orders except through the superintendent.

In my opinion the very best results are gotten under such plan of operation and the only really important thing in connection with such plan is that a thoroughly competent superintendent must be employed—he must not only understand the care of the golf courses, but he must be a man of executive ability who can command the confidence and respect of the employes.

Our superintendent is also charged with the duty of turning in to the chairman a monthly statement of each item of expense, separating under different items the department in which the money is spent, such as labor, seed, fertilizer, new equipment, machinery parts, tools, gasoline, oil, etc. In this way monthly comparisons can quickly be made as to how the expenses are running, and it is, therefore, easy to keep within the budget which is arranged and which is one of the necessary business features of maintaining golf courses.

When the superintendent is thus intimately acquainted with the expenditures, he is interested to see that only competent help is employed and that they give the proper service for the money which is paid to them.

In other words, the golfer of today, especially the tourist golfer, demands more and more each year, and it costs money to meet that demand. The maintenance of golf courses, therefore, is an important business and can only be successful when strictly business methods are applied.