

# YOU CAN'T STANDARDIZE YOUR course up-keep costs BUT YOU CAN SAVE BY ANALYZING

Says GUY C. WEST

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THE last few years have brought many changes to the golf course. The ideas of greenkeeping have changed; greenkeepers themselves have changed, and much more publicity has been thrown on the work done to keep the courses in condition. In connection with all these changes, more attention is now paid to where and how the money spent for golf course work goes; more attention is paid to details; certain agencies have been, and are, functioning with the aim of saving.

Golf course cost analysis systems have been brought out by the score in the past few years, with the admirable idea of trying to find out how and where the money has been spent. Many of the figures found from these systems have been published, or gathered by certain individuals and agencies, and from them certain comparisons have been made. In many cases these comparisons have been unjust, very unfair, and decidedly hurtful to the greenkeeper!

From all this, and coupled with business, which has been crying it aloud for years, has come the cry to "standardize." The advocates of "standardization" evidently believe that all courses can be run for a certain number of dollars, that no factors are strong enough to overcome their wishes to make a certain standard and to have all courses run on it!

## Standardization a Mirage

It would be well for us to see to what extent golf course maintenance can be standardized. First, there can be no standardization of golf course maintenance until all courses have the same climate, soil conditions, rainfall; are built on the same topography; have holes which are identical, and have the same amount of play! All of these factors can influence the costs very greatly from course to

course. How interesting for the golfer if all courses were the same! How impossible of execution anyway!

We cannot standardize even salaries on the golf course, or rate of wages paid the workmen. Courses around cities will always, in general, have to pay more wages than courses further away from centers of industry. In a survey I made recently of several courses in New England, I found wages running from \$3 to \$4.50 per day, and marked variations in ways of paying for overtime, watering, holiday and Sunday work. Obviously all greenkeepers should not be paid the same, for some are worth much more than others. The only salaries to be standardized seem to be those paid green committee chairmen, and these are standard in most clubs as consisting of no money and plenty of "kicks."

Practically all of the unjust comparison which has been made has been something like this: "Now, John Smith over here at the Seaside course has spent only \$20 an acre for fairway maintenance this year, and we spent \$30; our greenkeeper is slipping; we'd better fire him and try another." Another complaint seems to be that one club's total expenditures, as given out in their annual statement, is much different than another's.

The big trouble with practically all of these complaints is that *the many factors which affect the costs of golf course maintenance have not been sufficiently analyzed!* If the "wise men" who are preaching "standardization" because certain costs on various courses do not coincide would take as much time to study these factors as they do to clutter up print with their "findings," they really could save some club's money, for in many cases, undoubtedly, wrong methods under certain conditions are wasting money.

## Analyze Cost Factors

Let us outline a few factors which influence the costs on a golf course. In regard to the figure given out as the total expenditure for year, it often contains the cost of other game areas, clubhouse grounds, new work, etc. The only figures which we can compare are the cost of maintenance of one course with the cost of maintenance of another. If we wish to do this, we must be fair and study all the factors which affect the costs. We must study the degree of maintenance, the factors of soil, climate, rainfall, topography, amount of play, etc. We must study the wages and salaries paid. Then as we study and try to compare the costs for the various parts of the course, we must consider the various factors for each that influence the costs.

Factors that influence costs of greens include size of greens; amount of composting and fertilizing used; amount of insect and disease control work necessary; number of times cut per season; kind and condition of mowing equipment; kind of grass on greens; amount of weeding done; amount of watering necessary, and others.

Among fairway factors are topography; size, kind and condition of mowing equipment; amount of fertilizing, composting, watering, and insect and disease control work done; kind of grass; number of times cut during season. Another factor which affects the cost of mowing very much is whether the fairways are long unbroken stretches or are cut up extensively with traps.

Factors affecting cost of tees' maintenance include some of the above, and especially size; number; amount of patching necessary, and amount of play.

It may be easily seen that costs for rough and hazards are likewise influenced by various factors. From these mentioned above, it will be easy for anyone studying this subject to find other factors for each division of the work.

## Control Costs

How foolish it is to attempt to standardize golf course maintenance! How, indeed, can we do it? We simply can control those factors which we are able to control, and recognize the others as vital, and minimize them as much as possible. We must remember that each course is a different problem; indeed, there are many problems on each course, each different from the others, and each affected by its own factors.

If we cannot standardize maintenance, can we standardize a system of cost analysis for golf course maintenance? This is possible, but I do not feel that it would be advisable to do so for all courses, in spite of the fact that I have a system of my own which I believe could be used on any golf course. Many clubs have installed systems which are kept in part by club clerks or secretaries, and in many cases it would be foolish to throw aside these workable systems for another. Then, too, many greenkeepers have evolved, and are using, very fine systems in which they are naturally interested, and they will continue to be more interested in their own than in some other. The main thing in cost analysis is to have a workable system and to use it, and to get results from it!

## Rates Unjust Comparisons

Too long have organizations and individuals compiled figures of golf course maintenance costs and made unjust comparisons from them. Some Service Bureaus, formed to help golf clubs by co-operative buying and giving information, have referred fluently and frequently to what they have done, how great were the wastes in golf course maintenance, and how much they were saving their member clubs. The main trouble with what these Service Bureaus have done is that they haven't considered the greenkeepers at all in all of their constructive work. They forgot that golf course maintenance cannot be helped very much if the greenkeepers are not taken into consideration!

It is my opinion that Service Bureaus have levelled prices and have saved some clubs money. Against this, they have often bought inferior goods. But it was never the function of any Service Bureau to make unjust comparisons and statements, and I sincerely hope the last one has been made!

There is plenty of room left for standardizing, to some extent, methods of maintenance among clubs in sections, for example, where general maintenance is roughly the same. It would be a good policy to find the most economical means of doing certain operations efficiently, and then of educating the greenkeepers to do these operations along these lines. There can be set up for all courses of a championship type a certain standard toward which they can strive, such as good greens, large tees, fair traps, divotless fairways, etc., but the costs of mainte-



These are the men who attended the successful opening short course of greenkeepers held at the Pennsylvania State college

nance on even these can not be standardized.

This then is a plea for fairness of comparison, and Mr. Green-committee Chairman, as you look over the costs of your course, and compare them, costs on another course, be fair, and just! If you find that your greens have cost more than they did on the other course, consider all the factors which entered into their maintenance costs on both courses. It may be that by so doing you will find that there exists a factor which you can control, such as by purchasing new equipment, and by so doing you can reduce the costs. It may be that you will find that some uncontrollable factor is making your cost higher. At any rate, study the factors, and do not blame your greenkeeper unless you find after careful study that he deserves it. Talk it over with him, and you may find he has some ideas too. Remember that a "little milk of human kindness" often does more than censure.

So after all, standardization on the golf course can only apply to methods, and not to costs. Too many factors, many of which are uncontrollable, govern the costs. Let us resolve to be fair in our comparisons, and to study carefully all factors which may influence the costs before a decision is reached. Let the night which covers all of those unfair comparisons which have been made, usher in the dawn of a better understanding which will help all, greenkeepers, green-committee chairmen, and Service Bureaus, to work together for golf's good.

## Greenkeepers' Short Course Success at Penn State

By AUSTIN L. PATRICK

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THE first short course held at the Pennsylvania State College was surprisingly well attended. This was in spite of a heavy snowfall the day before the meeting. Forty-six clubs were represented by 62 individuals.

Tuesday morning the program was devoted to:

"Fundamental Principles of Fertilization" by A. L. Patrick.

"The Effect of the Various Fertilizer Experiments on the Growth of Blue Grass on DeKalb, Volusia, and Westmoreland Soils" by J. W. White.

"The Effect of Various Combinations of Fertilizers on Blue Grass and the Growth of Weeds on Hagerstown Soil" by C. F. Noll.

"The Practical Application of Experimental Results on Golf Course Fertilization" by Nickolas Schmitz.

Tuesday afternoon the addresses were: "Machinery for Golf Courses" by R. U. Blasingame and H. B. Josephson.

"Drainage of Golf Courses" by J. R. Haswell.

"Insects of the Golf Courses and Their Control" by V. R. Haber.

Tuesday evening those in attendance were entertained by the college golf squad