

Standard Contract for Manager Not Practical

Two noted managers say hire good general manager and be safe

GOLF club officials who have had misunderstandings with their managers often come out of the jams carrying the thought that if there had been a clear definition of the manager's duties and province, things would have run along smoothly. GOLFDOM has received many letters regarding a standard contract for managers or at least a contract which specifies the duties of the man being engaged as manager.

Recently an official of a western club wrote as follows:

"We are negotiating with a man who knows more about the golf end of a golf club than the direction of house operation. With the hope of enumerating all the duties necessary to the direction of the clubhouse for the comfort and convenience of the members, we thought suggestions on this matter probably would be available to you from other clubs. We would greatly appreciate any co-operation."

Discussing the contract details with some of the best known and most successful golf club managers in the country leaves the matter still up in the air. We cite, herein, statements from two leaders in club management and in each case they have forbidding doubts of the practicability of a standard contract. Whether or not their own thorough command of every phase of their jobs disqualifies them as experts on the contractual relations between golf club managers of less experience is debatable. GOLFDOM will welcome anything other managers and club officials have to say on the subject of a mutually satisfactory and helpful contract between the club and its manager.

One of the managerial notables tells us:

"I don't happen to know of any stipulations that should be embodied in a club manager's contract. Usually if a club manager knows his business he ascertains from the committee the policy they want carried out and goes ahead and operates accordingly. Personally, after 40 years in the

harness, I believe it more essential in operating a country club, in fact any club, to have a manager who knows both ends of the house, namely, the restaurant end and the manager's end. That is more important than knowing the golf end. However, he should be familiar with this, too. He can learn the golf end quicker than he can the operating end of the clubhouse.

"As stated above, I put in 40 years in this work and I am learning all the time.

Why A Contract?

"I agree with you that it would be wonderful if you could work out a standard contract for club managers, but I have always taken the stand that a contract doesn't amount to much, as committees could break it or make it so unpleasant for a manager that he would resign. I never had a contract in any club I have operated except one and that bound me to give two months' notice if I contemplated leaving the club. A successful manager of a club depends so much on the attitude of the committees. As you know, all large clubs usually have 60 to 80 or 90 men on committees and each man has an idea of his own as to how the club should be operated, regardless of whether he has ever stepped inside a club or belonged to one. When he is put on a committee he begins to assert his ideas, which costs the club plenty of money. No commercial enterprise could exist on changing the policy each year, as is done by appointing new committees from the club roster each year. I am strong for the idea of one general manager and operating with, perhaps, an operating committee of two or three men, and by doing so you can save the club you are managing at least 20 to 30%."

Each Case Different

Another has this to say:

"In the past eight years I have held the position of general manager in two clubs but have not found it necessary to have an agreement other than an exchange of

correspondence before I undertook my duties.

"Golf and country clubs are so differently constituted and vary so considerably in their general organization that it would be very difficult to draw a standard form of contract between a club and a general manager. There are, as you know, very few general managers charged with control of all the club's activities and doubt whether there are even two clubs whose requirements of a general manager are similar.

"The nature and extent of the duties, scope and authority given to a man appointed to the post of general manager of a golf or country club may be limited when he is appointed, but in course of time, as he gains the confidence of the board of governors and the membership becomes accustomed to the change in management, the responsibilities of the general manager will increase in proportion to the success attending his efforts.

Simplifying Work

"When a general manager is employed there is no necessity for green-committees, house committees, etc.

"An executive committee consisting of the president, vice president, secretary, treasurer and perhaps two other members, all of whom should be members of the board of governors, should be charged with the general control of the club's affairs, subject to the policies defined by the board of governors.

"On the executive committee, each of the members should interest himself particularly in a separate phase of the club's affairs, such as finance, house, golf courses, tournaments, etc., in order that the general manager will have but one officer, with whom he should discuss a particular subject. The general manager should attend all meetings of the executive committee.

"The proper place for the office of a club is at the club and not in a town miles away. The office and its staff should be under the direct control of the general manager. Much of the detail work of the secretary and treasurer can, and should, be performed for them at the club. All the club employees should be under the general manager. Any division of authority is almost certain to prove fatal to the whole plan of business arrangement. The steward, greenkeeper, professional and cashier must be given to understand that the old order has changed.

"If the club has made a wise selection

in its general manager the heads of the department will have nothing to lose and much to gain by loyal cooperation.

"A general manager should not be appointed with a view of economy in staff payroll. He should be permitted to employ the best staff obtainable. He is appointed to perform duties formerly assigned to elected committees of members who joined the club for pleasure and not to work overtime, and of course he is expected by reason of his experience to improve upon the work of the committees which he replaces.

"There are certain obvious differences between a club and a business concern but the differences are not great. The success of both depend upon good management. Both have something to sell. Both declare dividends, the former in cash, the latter in the shape of improved property and more pleasure to the membership.

Competition Prevails

"And in these days clubs have competition to contend with, for even the clubs with a full membership and a long waiting list must keep pace with the steady march of progress. Maintenance is not sufficient.

"A man taking the first appointment as general manager at a golf or country club, like all pioneers, will have some difficulties to overcome. There will be resistance on the part of the old employees. It will take time for the membership to become reconciled to the change and accept it. To be successful the general manager must have the full cooperation of the directors of the club, particularly during the first year. Thereafter the wisdom of the change and the fruits of his labors will be apparent.

"I think a country club is well advised in selecting a general manager who possesses more knowledge of golf courses and outside work than of the clubhouse management."

PICK GOLF JESTS FROM "PUNCH"

MR. PUNCH ON THE LINKS. E. V. KNOX, EDITOR. NEW YORK: RAE D. HENKLE CO. \$2.

From the stories of golf and the pictures illustrating the merry jibes at the players of that ancient and honorable game found in the pages of "Punch," Mr. Knox has skimmed the cream of text and illustrations and combined them into the attractive volume known as "Mr. Punch on the Links." It has thirty-two full page drawings by Punch artists.