

Hunt for Course Upkeep Data Shows Greenkeepers' Need

COMMENT on the maintenance cost articles printed in June GOLFDOM give ample confirmation of our statement that costs constitute the subject of greatest interest to greenkeepers and green-chairmen.

We repeat, for the benefit of those who overlooked our recital of policy in the June issue, that our fondest hope is that no course upkeep costs we print be used for purposes of comparison without full knowledge of all factors responsible for these costs. These are times when costs of doing business are being given searching investigation in every field. The golf turf field is being compelled to get down to a basis that will enable it to check up on results for the money expended. There are so many variable factors in making comparisons of course upkeep costs that some despair of ever reaching a good figuring standard. That opinion, however, is not shared by those who have delved most deeply into the subject. However, the way costs are usually kept now, it's hard to get any foundation for a good comparative study.

GOLFDOM to Finance Probe.

Because GOLFDOM has such convincing evidence that greenkeepers and club officials are intensely interested in getting a workable basis for cost accounting and checking, this publication is negotiating with Prof. Dickinson and Jay M. Heald, greenkeeper of the Country club of Greenfield, Mass., to dig into this matter during the winter session at Massachusetts Agricultural college. Assigned by Dickinson to make a preliminary study on this subject Heald got his ground work started during last winter's term of the M. A. C. greenkeeping school. GOLFDOM will finance further work along this line and invites each greenkeeper and club to send in, at the conclusion of the active 1930 season, a copy of its greenkeeping cost sheet, together with such comment regarding the condition of the course during the season, soil condition, architectural character, etc., as may be helpful in establishing a comparative basis.

One of the points that is bound to come out of such a consideration of costs is the matter of greenkeepers' salaries. Beyond any question the salaries now are too low, principally because the greenkeepers are not good salesmen of their own services. Some of the chairmen may question our repetition of this fact. Others have done so. Some greenkeepers may question the publication of figures showing a good man is working for amazingly little money here and there. Both criticisms are not to the point. What we are trying to learn, for the good of the entire field, is how much it cost to maintain a golf course, certain factors of the course being given.

Question Salary Figures.

Now, if a greenkeeper is maintaining his course in good shape for less than the average, it is reasonable to expect that his income benefit by some of the saving.

It's a tough job all along the line. Members of some clubs want every blade of grass and every grain of sand, right in place. The good greenkeeper will give them what they want, but they'll have to pay for the perfection of condition. This greenkeeper, too, although he may spend considerably above the average figure, is entitled to a bonus if his course is kept so it is 100% in every detail. The combination of method of determining the efficiency of expenditure and the appraisal of course condition improvement as set forth by Prof. Dickinson in a recent issue of GOLFDOM, will give both greenkeeper and his officials something to show them exactly where they stand instead of forcing them to blame cost mysteries on "the weather."

To give an indication of what the cost analyst is up against in trying to get a good safe start from available data, Mr. Heald says:

Studies Cases.

"The June issue of GOLFDOM contained on pages 54 and 68 just the sort of data I have been looking for, and while I am busy greenkeeping, I am not too busy to

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TABLE 1.

Labor Cost Percentages of Olympia Fields and Warren, Ohio, with Supervision							
	Greens	Fairways	Tees	Traps	Rough	Super	Balance
Olympia	35.5	11.5	10.5	12.9	9.4	11.2	13
Warren, Ohio	47	11.8	3	0.0	5	24	12

TABLE 2.

Labor Cost Percentages of Olympia Fields and Warren, Ohio, with Supervision Distributed on a Percentage Basis, and Heald's Average from Page 24, June GOLFDOM							
	Greens	Fairways	Tees	Traps	Rough	Balance	
Olympia	38.5	12.5	12	13.2	10.4	14.5	100*
Ohio	59	13.8	3.8	0.0	6.2	15.3	98.1
Heald (18)	32	12	6	9	5	36	100

*Probably Olympia's supervision should not be distributed as a labor cost.

TABLE 3.

Percentage Range Found by Heald on 18-Hole Courses and Those of Olympia and Ohio							
	Greens	Fairways	Tees	Traps	Rough	Balance	
Heald (18)	23-50	4-18	2-10	2-16	1-8		21-58
Olympia	38.5	12.5	11.6	13.2	10.4		14.5*
Ohio	59	13.8	3.8	0.0	6.2		15.3
Heald (9)	29-48	7-13	4-8	0-8	2-11		31-49

*Probably Olympia's supervision should not be distributed as a labor cost.

check these figures to see if my idea on cost ratios holds.

"Do you think if one told the greenkeeper or chairman of Warren that they are spending in proportion to their labor allowance as much to mow fairways as Olympia Fields spent, they would credit the information? Tables One and Two show it to be a fact. What would they say if you told them 18 other clubs averaged the same amount? Table Three practically shows it.

"As regards traps on this course in Ohio, certainly they must have them. Are they charged to greens? In that case the greens would be a little high as they appear.

"As the two courses listed supervision separate, I have treated them alike and the distributed supervision on a percentage basis, on the items including balance and compared to my findings, Table Two.

"I do not understand the wide difference in balance when compared to my original findings. This matter I would like to look into.

"Now for a minute let us forget the definite average and look at Table Three showing the range of per cent on 18-hole courses. You will note that all findings stay in the original range save Ohio's greens and traps (I still feel that there is an error on traps) and balance, and Olympia's tees and rough, the tees are close enough to consider in the range. These figures are with supervision distributed.

"Isn't there something substantial when in this comparison of averages when, having established a range for an 18-hole course or even a nine, that you can pick at random other courses, sift the figures,

throw out materials and the like, and have them fall in the range?

"Do not these findings prove that the matter of unit area has nothing to do with the findings?

"Isn't there evidence of the average percentage for labor for maintenance being established within reason, not hard and fast, if the figures are at hand to use?

"I believe that this is a start and the field can be made to cover materials, percentage relation of monies expended on the golf course as related to income, and perhaps the best thing to be established and the hardest is the percentage per month.

"I am frankly getting more interested in this subject as the facts present themselves and feel that if a definite plan were worked out it would not be long before a satisfactory answer would be obtained."

"The Lawn," by Prof. Lawrence S. Dickinson—Orange Judd Pub. Co., New York City, \$1.25.

THOSE who are interested in turf culture will find this book to be more or less elementary but its handling of the basic principles of turf culture entitled it to a prominent place in greenkeeping bibliography. Prof. Dickinson, as readers of GOLFDOM know, has a happy knack of dealing with the essentials in a way that nails them down as the platform of turf culture. Not only for the work around the clubhouse grounds and course does the latest Dickinson book justify itself, but for the important and profitable field into which many greenkeepers are getting, the province of consulting and supervising experts for members.