

It's the "Ritz" that Runs Clubs' Meal Service into Red

Says E. J. GOWDY

House-Chairman, South Shore Country Club

ARE golf clubs hungrily following false prophets into the red? Where you hear so much said by each new year's crop of house chairmen about operating the club food service on a very ritzy and distinguished basis, you can put it down in the book that nine times out of ten the acolytes are riding to falls.

This flossy idea of meal service is a hangover from the cradle-days when golf was supposed to be only for the 400. As a matter of simple fact the snootiest of clubs have simple menus. The manager of one of the most exclusive golf clubs in the country has told GOLFDOM that his Thursday corned beef and cabbage dinner draws more of a crowd of hungry captains of finance than any other menu feature. At another one of the ultra layouts its hamburger steaks are the boast of its members. Of course, that's the big play for the men, with the women's parties it's different.

Along this line GOLFDOM is happy to print the remarks of E. J. Gowdy, house-chairman of the South Shore C. C. of Buffalo. Mr. Gowdy is an apostle of the simple life around mealtime and it won't do any of the house-chairmen harm to consider his enthusiastic testimony. The South Shore committee chief says:

"For the past two years, it has been up to me to change conditions in our dining room. The members did not patronize it in sufficient numbers to make it interesting or profitable. This seems to be the condition in the majority of the golf clubs today. It seems almost impossible to operate the dining room successfully.

"If the opinion of one man is interesting, I am frank in stating that they are too exclusive. They are being run for the benefit of about 10 per cent of the members. De luxe service costs real money and the average member is more interested in golf than he is in a fancy meal.

"Exclusiveness is right and proper in

certain clubs, but golf today is a popular game and the average golfer does not like to be gypped for frills in the dining room. They want a good meal, well cooked, and neatly served. They are willing to pay the right price, but they do not want to put on any "dog." I can prove this about 100 per cent from my experience at the South Shore.

"Strange as it may seem to many, the men who were the more able to pay for the de luxe service enjoyed the simple, home-like atmosphere that abounds around the dining room and clubhouse in general. It became popular. The men had their wives and children stay for dinner with the result that the dining room broke even. That is all any club expects; dining rooms are not run for profit.

"When clubs start catering to *all* the members instead of the few, they will get out of the rough and back on the fairway. I travel a great deal and find conditions very similar in various parts of the country. I have talked with big men and they put me wise to the trouble. They want simplicity, but they tell me it is the 'would-be' big fellow that wants deluxe service, which he cannot afford to pay for.

"Speaking of management: The South Shore C. C. was so far in the 'rough' the members had almost decided to pick up their balls and walk the hole. Money disappeared like golf balls in a water hole; still the course was not in shape. Members were kicking, and they had a right to kick. Something had to be done and done quickly. New officers were elected and they tackled an almost impossible job. I could go into great detail and tell you what a wonderful success they made of it. Not with money, but by management. Today the South Shore C. C. has eighteen of the sportiest holes in western New York and they are in better financial shape than most clubs."

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