

# Golfdom

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## Budgeteers Awaken to Need for Adequate Greens Funds

By HERB GRAFFIS

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"It is far easier to obtain appropriations for such items as orchestras, interior decorations, and the like, than for such essentials as fertilizers or new greens equipment. Very frequently is the equipment at the disposal of greenkeepers of poor quality and inadequate, and rarely indeed is the greenkeeper furnished with proper buildings for storage of equipment and supplies.

"The success of a golf club depends almost entirely on the quality of the golf course. Yet the greens budget is the one that is cut to the lowest possible figure, and today clubhouses usually consume more of the club's income than the game for which the clubs were founded and to which they owe their existence.

"In many large clubs, the cost of running the clubhouse exceeds the costs of maintaining two golf courses. In addition, the clubhouse restaurant has a loss running into several thousands of dollars while green-fees received from the courses run to nearly half the maintenance budget."

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". . . a total net operating income amounting to over \$250,000 in the latter six years . . ."

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THE first quotation above is from R. Avery Jones' article in the latest Green Section *Bulletin*. The second, briefer excerpt is from "Scientific Golf Club Management—The Example of Baltusrol G. C.," and is by the same Jones, general manager at Baltusrol. The figures refer to the financial showing made at Baltusrol dur-

ing the six years of Jones' management, and they identify Jones as one whose ideas on golf club operation merit consideration.

Jones is a "general manager," and on that account some greenkeepers would howl for help at the mere mention of his title. Nevertheless he bobs up in two places the same month with so straightfor-

ward and strong a statement of the case the greenkeepers and informed green-chairmen have been pleading that he has a hand coming from them. This brings us the suspicion that when the general management stunt is worked primarily for the club by a competent man, all of the department heads gain. But today, according to one of the best known and successful golf club managers in the country, you'd have a hard time naming a dozen men qualified to function profitably as general managers of golf clubs.

### "Damn the Torpedoes"—Jones

Jones, by the records is one of those twelve men. Temperamentally he is a fellow who doesn't break down in a good cry about what anyone thinks of him or the general management plan so long as he can show a net operating income, without trick bookkeeping, averaging more than \$40,000 a year. GOLFDOM's editor knows several representative Baltusrol members well and they brag of the club's operation. They boast the club is run for the entire membership and for that reason Jones is not a bit bashful about crossing swords with any member who has some pet nut notion contrary to the tested policy for the good of the order. He bats up in a way that would mean the air for the manager under usual conditions but \$40,000 a year net is the heavy ammunition on his side.

When a man with this background condemns the myopic penury of greens budget hatchet men in general, the obvious inference is that he must be somewhat reminiscent and that the present enviable status of Baltusrol is in no small measure due to spending an adequate amount on its courses.

### Nickel-Nursing Spendthrifts

Many a greenkeeper has devoted a considerable part of that brief time between checking up on night watering and the dawn engagement in the brown-patch sec-

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### THE GREENSMAN WEPT!

THE annual financial statement of a country club in a large Middle West city has just been issued.

Among many interesting items, two significant ones occur:

\$2,396.16 for drapes and furniture

710.63 for machinery repairs and renewals

Those figures remind us of our annual duck hunting parties when the requisitions used to read like this:

10 cases Budweiser

6 cans Soup

Drapes and furniture are INCIDENTAL to the game of golf.

Machinery is an ESSENTIAL and without it golf could not exist.

Yet machinery is the LEAST EXPENSIVE ITEM WHICH APPEARS ON MANY COUNTRY CLUB ANNUAL STATEMENTS.

Remember THAT when your Superintendent comes to you with a request for enough money to keep his machinery modern and useful.

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tor, studying his cost sheets. Out of it all comes just one clear truth: replacement of man-power by machinery is the only way to preserve a high standard of course condition without increasing the course upkeep cost.

Then comes pathos. The greenkeeper is no salesman. Unless his chairman knows the situation and the figures intimately and is a stubborn, battling sort of a bird, the board says, "you'll have to get along without it," or "have him patch up what we have or get something second-hand." The battle against rising course costs is lost right there; the condition of the course is bound to suffer and in

these days of spirited competition for members, clubs with a course short of perfect condition are certain to find their financial future cloudy.

As an example of what some thought and foresight will do, we can cite an instance of 1930, the case of one of the best maintained courses in the United States. The maintenance total is so low that by printing it we would risk getting greenkeepers in hot water. They don't detail the use of modern machinery on a golf course; it is buried in an interestingly small total.

Previously, the greenkeeper operated two trucks, each of them requiring two men. He had begged for an automatic dump truck but until a new chairman got on the job the greenkeeper was stalled off. The new chairman sandbagged through \$920 for the new equipment. In 1930 it did the same work that previously required two trucks and four men. The new equipment paid for itself, by wage saving alone, the first year!

### Shut Eyes to Obsolescence

It often occurs to us that too much of a point is made of the long life of many pieces of golf course maintenance equipment. In an operation as new as today's method of golf course maintenance, the

manufacturers are pushing forward the performance standards so swiftly that it would pay clubs to junk many pieces of substantial old equipment in favor of improved, speedier appliances. We have before us the operating figures of an establishment standardizing on one make of maintenance equipment. Although some of this equipment has been operated under severe conditions for seven years, the annual cost of repair parts for this constantly-used machinery is less than three per cent.

You might easily look at three per cent and be inclined to forget the tremendous labor economies that could be effected by junking equipment out-dated by manufacturer's later models. That extravagant mistake will be made by too many unless the budget for 1931 is figured beyond the end of the green-committee's and finance committee's noses.

This is the year of years for the thoughtfully operated golf club to bid farewell to the foolishness of straining at the gnat of purchases for maintenance and swallowing the mountain of cost for dispensable and unnoticeable trimmings.

## Machine Cost Cutting Salvation of Budget

By "THE COLONEL"

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FURTHER indication of response to the warning against blind blundering with the greens budget comes in the accompanying analysis of the conditions and the logical "out". The writer is one of the country's well known, practical authorities on course maintenance.

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MAJOR R. AVERY JONES of Baltusrol contributes to a recent number of the Green Section *Bulletin* a very timely article on "*The Greenkeepers' Dwindling Budget.*" All will agree that it deals with a subject of growing importance to the golf clubs. Many of these, as we all know, are faced today with the problem of how to keep their expenses within the limits of their resources without detracting from the high standard of course maintenance members insist upon.

Major Jones remarks: "In these days, golf clubs are so numerous there is real competition and the one that falls behind in the standard of the golf course is apt to see a declining membership and declining income—a very serious situation for the club."

This situation resolves itself obviously into the question, how are these two apparently irreconcilable interests to be adjusted?

In reviewing this subject we are venturing to predict that the clubs will have to look for help in the direction of time-saving machinery. Perhaps many of them have not kept informed on the truly amazing advances that have been made more or less recently in this field, improvements which enable standard mowing machinery to attain a speed of operation never before thought possible.

It will be observed that nearly all manufacturers of mowers in this country are now exploiting new designs which are credited with the power to quicken greatly all major mowing operations. If saving time is also saving money, what would be more profitable than for our clubs to investigate these claims?

If it is true that the 40 to 60 minutes now consumed in cutting by hand an average putting green, has been reduced drastically, and the cutting time of the fairways at least two-thirds, does not this give the choice to a club with a "dwindling budget," of two ways out of its difficulty—either to dispense altogether with two-thirds of the men at present employed on these two operations, or better still, to transfer these men to other work upon the course, which has probably been heretofore somewhat neglected from motives of economy?

If the standard of upkeep can at least be maintained and all of this time thus saved in the several operations, what better way is there than this to settle this economic question?

Everybody of course has observed that the cutting operations, particularly of greens, are very expensive. But it has always been assumed that the fundamental importance of the work and its difficult character has forced upon the greenkeeper not only the employment of the best men but a full complement of them. Up to date, this has meant that about half of the entire maintenance force has been assigned to the mowing department. This suggested substitution of labor and time-saving machines will not only result in a reduced budget, but what is perhaps of equal advantage, a freer course for the players, since the operators can get off the greens and fairways much quicker than ever before. And all without in the least disturbing the critical labor situation.