

Ray Hall Fills Double Job as Manager-Pro

By RAY HALL

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Advancement of golf clubs on a substantial basis in the smaller communities calls for the development of an expert and versatile type of management. There's a new opportunity for the younger professionals and other department heads that may be successfully handled in the manner Ray Hall describes.

MERIDIAN G. and C. C. is one of the smaller country clubs maintaining all the usual club activities. The club is eight years old and has had the usual varied existence of struggle and triumph.

We have about 175 stockholders owning 120 acres of land, one mile from the city limits and on a state and national highway. We operate an 18-hole golf course, two tennis courts, two croquet courts under electric lights, have a fine lake covering several acres stocked yearly with game fish, and used as a course hazard.

When the club was organized as a private club the members experienced the usual financial problems with a small membership. After four years of meager existence the club was sold to a fraternal organization as a club and playground for exclusive use of members of the order, and was operated under very small annual dues, which resulted in another lack of finances.

Two years ago a new organization was formed, with the club being owned by the stockholders who pay annual dues of \$24.00.

The golf and tennis privileges were thrown open to the public at a fee of 25c for tennis and 25c for nine holes of golf or 50c for eighteen. Fishing and clubhouse features are used by members only. Operating the golf course as a public course has solved the financial problem.

Enid is a city of 30,000 population, with three 18-hole golf courses. One private

club, one strictly fee course and ours, a combination. Our clubhouse as yet, is not up to standard, and the social and club entertainment activities are not as numerous as where a fine clubhouse is available. We have the usual officers, directors, and one permanent committee, the green- or golf-committee.

The extra revenue from fee players has enabled us to put in effect quite an improvement program. During the past year we have built picnic houses and facilities, improved the dam and lake, built the croquet courts and installed a practice green under flood lights for night entertainment. A decided change in the course also is under way. Five new greens are being built, and five are being enlarged and improved. We are building larger tees, and trapping six greens. The course will be re-arranged by April 1st, with 6100 yards, par 72, and reasonably difficult for a combination membership and fee course. A new clubhouse will be the next big undertaking for 1932.

Qualifying as Golf Plant Operator.

I have acted in the capacity of manager and pro a little more than a year, and all the improvements and expansion have been since I came here.

The combination of a Manager-Professional is peculiar in several ways, but has its decided advantages. Especially so for the small club confronted with the usual financial problems.

I am a college man with a commercial

or business training. My own experience includes activity in athletics in high school and college, coaching athletics some, playing a little semi-pro baseball, and operating a retail sporting goods business for a few years. My interest in athletics led me to take up golf after I left college and while in the retail business I studied the golf activities seriously, both as a player and from a sales standpoint. I acquired a fair ability as an amateur golfer, but only turned to a professional when I came to this club. However, I have visited golf factories, gained much valuable knowledge from club makers, and professionals all the time I was in the retail business with the idea I might some day become a pro; at least this gave me a lot of fine information valuable in retailing. When we had no professional available I taught many of my retail customers their first steps in golf, and repaired clubs in the shop in the store.

My interest and experience in athletics is valuable now in assisting my membership in taking up tennis, croquet, etc. Usually the golfer also is a fan in some other sport and he appreciates your knowledge of these other lines.

Keeps Him Busy.

Of course in all important matters of administration I am guided by the wishes of the officers and directors, but the details of operation, planning, etc., are left to me. I supervise all labor and work on the course, purchase all supplies, collect all green-fees in the shop and much of the dues, although some pay dues direct to the secretary-treasurer, who is a business man in town. I promote all tournaments and entertainment, plan the course re-construction, which is of course approved by my golf committee, and look after the lunches and activities at the clubhouse.

Then I have the usual run of professional duties. I operate quite a complete shop handling a good line of clubs, balls, bags, etc., with clubs from at least four leading factories. I have a shop assistant, who looks after the caddies, helps with sales and repair work. I do all the teaching which is not as much as in some clubs, but remember ours is not a large club and we have another professional here too.

All the concessions are given to the manager-pro, including cold drinks, cigars, and lunches for golfers, and all are handled right in the pro shop.

It's a busy job for a fellow who likes to keep busy. I do not have as much time to play golf as many pros, but my idea is that the pro in a small club will be far ahead if he devotes most of his time to sales and inside work than if he is a playing pro. By playing pro, I mean the fellow with average ability who plays with his members most of the time, and not the tournament professional. In other words, watch the shop, sell the goods, give service and a jolly "hello" to all who come. This is especially valuable, yes essential, where you are operating a fee course. Yet I find time for several rounds of golf each week.

The concessions at a live golf course are quite a source of revenue, and where they are granted to the manager-pro, it saves the club much in his salary. Then he is responsible to his customers for all kinds of service rendered, and this service and satisfaction means money to him, so he is sure to not neglect it. Having this manager reside at the club is a saving in his living expense and a service to the club as he is there practically all the time to give his attention to anything that comes up. I am always out in the morning and give the employes their working instructions when their day begins. I am here during the day to see the work is done, and here in the evening if there are any activities going on. One man at the head of all departments keeps him in touch with all members, even though their activities vary.

Future in This Plan.

For the small club that needs to economize, and which depends largely on various committees or officials to supervise the operation, I feel the manager-pro system is an advantage. I am not saying this is necessary or advisable for a large club, where ample finances are available to maintain a high class, efficient man as a manager and another as professional. Naturally where the many duties are combined, a large and very active club would have too much for one man to handle.

But it is an established fact that many of our smaller clubs (and some not so small) are finding an overhead expense problem that is hard to solve. They have a limited number of members at conservative rates for dues, and there seems to be only one way to increase revenue; that is throw their golf course open to the public. In all small clubs there is quite a per-

centage of the members who are not golfers, and many others who play a small part of the time. Yet the cost of course maintenance is the same as though each member played every day. In reality many clubs cannot afford to keep their courses in A-1 condition for the number of members who really use it consistently. Why not keep the course filled with outside players and double your revenue, at practically no increase in cost?

Also, in the small club the officers and committeemen usually do not devote any too much time to the planning and operation of the club because they are men who have businesses that, of necessity, takes most of their time. One man at the head of all operations greatly relieves these men, and results in more efficient administration. The duties of the management for the small club are not so great or numerous but that one wide-awake hustler can take care of them with success. Then, under one head, the various programs and departments dove-tail into one plan.

Truly you may not be able to have an A-1 professional and club manager in one man, but do all small clubs demand an A-1 professional or manager? If finance will not permit, they may have to sacrifice a little ability or efficiency in either line to get all that is needed of one man.

Must Broaden Training.

Just where these manager-pros are to be found or developed, I am not so sure. The fact is, nearly all our professionals come up from the caddie ranks, shop assistants, etc., in other words, up through the game of golf. Naturally then, their experience and training (or lack of it along business lines) might seem to exclude many of them from this new field.

Then when we look over the many men who seem to have the administrative ability to fill that job, they are usually decidedly lacking in necessary qualities to fill the demands of a pro. I am inclined to think that if there are many men filling this combined job, they are similar to my case, probably coming from the business field. Yet there are many young golf professionals who have had some business experience, and who could by some study or preparation well qualify to fill these combined positions. Also there are some business men who are good amateur golfers, who by some study in factories and pro shops and advice from good pros, could make very successful professionals for

small clubs. But, unless the club can offer some pretty good inducement or rosy prospect, can they get these men to retire from their activities, move out to the club and put in all the daylight hours, even though there is a great appeal in the wide open spaces? In my case, there was what seemed to be in this club, when I looked it over, the making of a fine golf course, natural lay-out, lake, good turf, etc., and an opportunity to put a club on its feet. And after all, part of our remuneration is the pride we find in solving the problems and seeing our efforts rewarded by the satisfaction expressed by our members and officials.

Should this idea of One-Man-Administration be taken up seriously by small clubs, I am sure it will offer a new field for the young professional who can by a serious study of the needs of a club manager and greenkeeper, fit himself to fill the other parts of this job. But he will have to be a fellow who likes system, a good merchandiser in more than golf equipment, a greenkeeper, a mixer, an organizer, and a fellow who likes to keep busy. Qualifying himself for such a field of work as this is at least worthy of consideration by many young professionals.

Many professionals are good business men. They possess the qualities of foresight, organization and system and no doubt can qualify in this capacity. But in many cases these men are in large clubs that do not need to combine these positions in one head, and the clubs that need them may not have the inducement to offer. So it seems to bring us to the question, "Can the young business man who has the business qualifications fit himself to become a successful professional, or can the competent professional acquire the necessary business qualities to fill the demands as a club manager?"

To the golf professional, it would seem, this is a new field of endeavor, which if he qualifies, will greatly increase his demand and usefulness, and should be a source of increased prosperity and financial benefit to both himself and his club.

Milwaukee, Wis.—Globe Union Mfg. Co. has acquired the Great Lakes Golf Corp. Globe Union also makes batteries and roller skates. C. B. Johnson continues as operating head of Great Lakes under the new ownership.