

Winter Is Season For Manager to Plan Policy Changes

By HENRY DUTTON

THERE IS probably no busier group of individuals than the golf and country club managers. Because of the very nature of golf club operation with its uncertainties, sudden peak loads, and the other ramifications which characterize the service the average country club must provide for its membership, the manager has little time during the season to ponder, to plan, and to devise ways and means for increasing business or introducing new ideas.

He must bear much of the detail of his management himself, whereas his brothers in the larger town clubs may delegate authority to their subordinates. Consequently the golf club manager must do the bulk of his thinking during the winter months. It is therefore not amiss at this time to give consideration for the plans of the coming campaign of 1932.

Naturally, we are all desirous of being like the man who, having had his legs run over by a steam roller and while they were hustling him to the hospital, said, "my pants needed pressing anyway." We have been able to discover no real foundation for optimism concerning the season of 1932; yet on the other hand, it is not going to help anyone if the managers lay down and take bad business for granted.

The American people have always been very strong for the slogan "Where there is life there is hope" and as long as our clubs are *continuing to do business* there is still an opportunity to better the situation as it exists.

Membership Problem Is Keen

The principal problem in most country clubs will be that of membership and it seems to me that although it may not be the manager's job in many clubs to concern himself with this phase of its business, he certainly can prove invaluable to the organization which employs him, if he will give considerable study to the membership and devise ways and means of maintaining the club's roster at its present strength and to determine also by investigation and study what methods may be used to increase the membership to full

strength by the addition of new members.

After membership, comes the question of volume in club departments. This of course is effected materially by the decline in membership but we know that there are many innovations being tried by clubs in various parts of the country to attract a greater amount of patronage.

Building Departmental Gross

It takes the form in some clubs of business promotion on the part of the manager in the winter months and the making of contacts with brokerage houses, banks and other organizations of high calibre which hold golf outings during the season and attempting to interest them in the facilities which his club is able to offer. This is particularly beneficial to clubs located some distance from the city whose members give most of their patronage to it over the week-ends. In these clubs there are two or three days in the week when business is very slack, and the entertaining of such parties in no way interferes with the playing privileges of its membership.

There has been a plan adopted in some clubs, to offer special types of membership. One club offers a morning membership whereby, at reduced fee, individuals may have the use of the course until 1 o'clock, except on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, but are given no other privileges in the club.

Junior memberships have been tried with success and we have lately heard of a type of membership which gives the privileges of the club and its departments, but which provides that a green-fee must be paid when the members use the golf course.

There are many other ideas which have been tried out with considerable success in the last year for the purpose of building business during those days and hours least used and to bring a greater amount of volume to the various income bearing departments.

Add Attractions to Lure Patrons

Frequent tournaments, sweepstakes and special events, not only on the golf course

but in connection with bridge, teas and entertainments of various characters are absolutely essential to the stimulation and promotion of business whereby the club may add to its gross revenue.

Although a great deal of effort will be exerted by the average golf club this year in connection with the points I have touched upon above, these in themselves will not solve the problems completely. The question of cost of operation, the introductions of methods of efficiency and economy, play a big part in the final result obtained at the end of the year.

It is appropriate therefore that our manager should give considerable attention to the club's financial structure and operation, the methods they are employing in its management. They should take inventory of the club's business methods to the end that the best ideas available today may be introduced.

Modernize Food Department

Inasmuch as it is in the restaurant that most clubs find their heaviest losses at the end of the year, the question arises as to whether or not many of our country clubs are on the wrong track so far as restaurant operation is concerned.

There was a time when the country club member considered his club a luxury to the extent that he was willing to pay almost any price for the meal which he bought for himself and his guest. He expected the deluxe type of service and a choice of menu items which rivaled those of Delmonicos and Sherry's.

We doubt if that is true today, for the average golfer has become more sensible in food matters and realizes that his habits of eating play a great part in his quest for health and wellbeing. No longer will a golfer sit down to a heavy lunch and then go out and play 18 holes, nor will the enthusiast who plays 36 holes in a day load his stomach with heavy viands between rounds.

Inasmuch as the trend is toward lighter food and those dishes which are more appetizing through their attractiveness, it follows also that employment of expensive kitchen staffs are no longer essential.

Not only has a change taken place in regard to the habits of golfers themselves but we find a renaissance as well in regard to the dining custom of the entire family.

Why is it that the tea rooms, cafeterias, coffee shops, and restaurants which specialize in home cooking have sprung up like

mushrooms and thrived these past few years, whereas the more elaborate dining places which continue to feature continental food have, in most cases, a handful of people patronizing them? Because there has been a change and this change is towards simpler eating.

This is not meant to be a treatise upon the eating habits of the general public in this day and age for many better qualified than myself have been setting forth their arguments in trade journals and proving their point.

More Profit in Simple Items

What I am leading up to is this. It is pretty well recognized that the golfing public and the families of this same group are satisfied with simpler and more healthful types of menu items and it will be a wise golf and country club manager who will staff his kitchen with less expensive employees who are thoroughly capable of producing delightful and attractive yet simple and appetizing items of food which can be produced to meet the average pocketbook today and show a greater profit or a smaller loss, as the case may be, than the heavier types of food served in the past.

Consider also the smaller possibility of loss on these items than one finds in buying loins and ribs, racks, chicken and game and keeping them in the ice box subject to the call which often does not come.

We believe it is time for the country club manager to think it over and consider the idea of the simplified cuisine mentioned above for greater satisfaction, not only to club members as individuals but in new results on the club's financial statement. This is a new age, new habits on the part of the eating public concerning cuisine and, sad though it may be, it is also true that new ideas in regard to spending have taken possession of them also.

Managers must meet these conditions with progressive ideas.

Many may take a leaf from Colonel Holden's book of experience at Olympia Fields and install the cafeteria idea. Sounds ridiculous to see "cafeteria" and "country club" used in the same sentence but most of us have learned not to be surprised at anything.

These are your planning days, Mr. Country Club Manager—How will you make use of them?

TRAIN waiters and bus-boys to be economical with linen. It will reduce laundry bills appreciably.