

Economy on the Golf Course

By JOHN QUAILL

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THE GREENKEEPER'S role as the goat in budget cutting requires him to make two suggestions to finance committees, began Mr. Quail, who named these points as: (1) what will be eventual economy of the program? (2) will repair cost and loss of time of worn-out equipment be more costly than replacement?

Design of golf course, soil conditions, wealth of club, demands of membership and ability of greenkeeper govern cost of course maintenance, Quail continued, and cited greenkeepers' need of balance in executive ability, turf culture and mechanics as vital in contending with reduction in budgets.

True economy in maintenance dates back to construction and many present problems are faults of architect and contractor, he alleged, but further cited topography of course as an unavoidable controlling factor. He questioned the wisdom of unduly big greens on score of playing requirement, mowing, fertilizing, watering, top-dressing, fungicide cost and construction cost. Much of this is, in his opinion, in unnecessary undulations. He put 8,000 sq. ft. as a maximum green size for thrifty maintenance. Tees should be larger as they afford one of the best spots for course economy. He stated:

With economy in view a golf course can be constructed that will be a greenkeeper's paradise: medium sized greens, large tees, fewer but larger traps, and if there is any need for terraces they should be pulled out into long, gradual slopes for cutting by power mowers.

Even the tough problems of economical maintenance of hilly courses could be eased by architects and builders, although drainage of such topography continues to be a puzzle. He said, on this irrigation, and on trap building:

The water you put on the fairways runs down into the roughs and you have a nice, luscious growth which, getting a couple of inches long, offers the best of hiding places for a ball. Likewise with fertilizer. Put it on the fairways and the roughs get the benefits. Drainage is also a trouble. The seepage from the hillsides must be taken care of, and that is no little problem. When you put in drains, install them with the idea of some day extending them so you can pick them up and run new ones to the main if necessary.

Some people say that a large trap is an expense. All traps are an expense as far as that goes, but a large trap is more

economic to keep up. There are less banks and terraces and less work trimming. If they are properly constructed, the amount of labor required will be negligible compared to keeping three little ones. It may seem like it takes a lot of sand to fill them up, but there is less wastage.

Equipment Insures Thrift

Relative to equipment, the Highland man commented:

Good equipment is best insurance against high upkeep costs. Equipment that is in the shop about one day out of 5 for repairs is a drain on the treasury. You not only lose the services of the machine but you lose the time of men repairing it and cost of parts.

He said that with the mowing equipment on the market today the gamekeeper could almost forget his fairway mowing. He discussed power greens mowing and said that again the course topography entered because of the time element in transferring power mowers from one green to another. He mentioned that at his course one man cut all tees and approaches in a day with a 30 in. power mower and had time left for cutting clubhouse lawns. With hand mowers, three men were needed for the work.

Referring to mechanical distribution of fertilizer he remarked:

Modern equipment for top-dressing and spreading fertilizer are great money savers. It is nothing to top-dress 18 greens a day with the top-dressing distributor. Fertilizer can be applied in a short time and be applied more evenly. For fairway fertilizing, the lime spreader can be adapted to most any type fertilizer used. Last spring when I applied fertilizer, we used the lime spreader, altered a bit. We covered 15 fairways in one day with two men hauling and two spreading. The ground thawed that night and it was too soft to use the spreader the next day, so as we only had one more fairway to fertilize we decided to do it by hand. Ten men lined up with buckets to do the job and it took the ten men one hour and a half to fertilize that one fairway. If the lime spreader didn't save money and time then I don't know what I'm talking about.

Careful in Buying

Careful study of buying was urged as a self-preservation move for the greenkeeper. In citing the advantages of basic knowledge of materials, he set forth a misleading analysis of fertilizer as a typical case

of competent investigation determining true value. On buying seed, Quall remarked:

Grass seed is another item which can run up costs very fast. Cheap grass seed is cheap grass seed and nothing else. Good seed is good seed and a lot more. It is insurance that it will grow and produce a good turf. Why buy a seed with a germination percentage of 60% for \$30 per hundred when you can buy an 80% seed for \$35 per hundred and get better results? Buy your seed on the basis of a guaranteed analysis and from a reputable seed house and you will have the satisfaction of knowing you are getting seed true to name and of the best quality.

One of the handicaps to economical maintenance is the pressure brought to bear on buying from members. He told of a case where 10 members of a club said they must have business from the watering system being installed or they would resign. The directors weakened and difference in delivery dates, character of pipe, checking up on orders and deliveries continually tied up the job and ran up expense. Extension of the installation next season was handled on a competitive bid basis. No member resigned and the club was saved considerable money.

Effects of staff reductions which do away with the niceties in course mainte-

nance that identify a first-class course were pointed out. Results of pay cuts reducing efficiency and spirit of the staff also were mentioned as something greenkeepers must carefully guard against. He advocated changing tasks of men so they would retain interest and strongly advocated having all greensmen play golf. He said his own chairman gave him a valuable policy tip in labor management by remarking that when the greenkeeper was doing manual work it meant some one of the staff had been improperly trained or was loafing.

Quall strongly emphasized the peril of procrastination in golf course work. In laying down his conclusion of making certain that enforced economies were not penny-wise and pound-foolish cases, he expressed himself thusly:

At this time practically every club in the country is retrenching and thinking out the financial problems which are confronting them. Now is the time for the greenkeeper to get his words in and tell where he thinks it best to start the economy program. Tell your chairman what you think and show him that you are not sitting back and letting them work out your problems. Tell him your ideas and I'll bet he will approve a bunch of them and give you credit for being wide awake and on the job.

Present Day Qualifications of the Greenkeeper

By O. B. FITTS

(Greenkeeper, Columbia Country Club, Chevy Chase, Md.)

VARIOUS educational campaigns of the past few years, said Mr. Fitts, have resulted in greenkeepers assuming responsibilities which formerly were on the shoulders of the green-chairman, golf architect, construction engineer and other experts and specialists. In other years, the greenkeeper was a sort of foreman, carrying out all but the merest of routine work on orders of the green-chairman.

These educational campaigns, however, have awakened the greenkeepers to the necessity of keeping abreast of the times, of gaining all possible knowledge of the many intricate phases of golf construction and maintenance, of becoming in fact earnest students of their profession. Changing standards, improved types of equipment, new turf diseases and pests have added to the greenkeeper's responsibilities and have given him an incentive to anticipate the future through study.

Take On Alteration Work

The speaker referred to the greenkeeper's part in course alteration programs, saying:

During the five years that I was with the U. S. G. A. Green Section I visited many

golf courses. At many of these I found some change or alteration either in progress or under contemplation for the golf course. In most of these cases, especially if the alteration was to be of any consequence, the services of an architect had been or was to be secured for planning the work, and in some instances a construction engineer was also called into service. All of which was, in most cases in those days, the wisest thing for the club to do, for the average greenkeeper had not gone in for that type of work and was not qualified to handle it.

The story is different today, however, for the successful greenkeeper has made a study of the architectural and constructional phases of golf course work during the more recent years and has demonstrated his ability to execute any alteration of the course in a manner that satisfies the whims of the golfer and at the same time simplifies maintenance problems more than the work of some one who is not as familiar with local conditions. This knowledge and ability has made it possible for the greenkeeper to demand a better salary and at the same time effect a saving for his club.