

Golfdom

The Business Journal of Golf

REG. U. S. PATENT OFFICE

Vol. 6

MAY, 1932

No. 5

Department Teamwork Right Route to Club Economy

By L. J. FESER
Supt. of Course, Woodhill C. C.

WITH THE NEW golf season well under way, everyone interested in the mechanics of golf course operation is looking forward to the fall summary with a more or less pessimistic opinion of what the records will show. This feeling is shared alike by committeemen, house managers, greenkeepers and professionals. The pessimism may be attributed to that very popular goat, business depression.

There seems to be little doubt in the minds of any of these men that this season will call for far greater efficiency and more needle-threading economy than any previous season on record. So-called wealthy clubs are no better off than the most humble cow-pasture layouts. Receipts and expenditures must be in line with each other. The more complete layouts, however, must face the economy program with much more care, for greater valuations of property are involved as well as a larger number of employees.

It is reasonable to presume that the operating business of golf has been as seriously affected by past inflation as any other large business. Keen minded committeemen must necessarily use the axe in the three divisions of operative organization headed by professional, house manager and greenkeeper. These men are more vitally affected by budget slashing

than any other individuals within or outside of the membership roster. The erstwhile efficiency expert is inclined to cast a fishy eye at these heads of departments and, first thought, seeks to co-ordinate two or all of the divisions under the control of one man.

The general manager system, with a few conspicuous exceptions, has been exposed as a fallacy by the light of experience. Operation of the three departments can be carried on most economically by three heads, provided that the men chosen to head the departments are masters of their professions and efficient in their work.

The weakness of the general manager system in the average club is obvious. A manager must employ individuals to act in the capacity of steward, greenkeeper and golf professional. If the individuals so employed are qualified to do their work properly, the general manager is superfluous. If he employs men who are not qualified, the manager must be more or less of a superman, for recent years have demonstrated that greenkeeping is a science, professionalism a business and stewardship an art. Yet any one of these professions involve business, science and art, all of which are decidedly different in their nature.

The redeeming feature of the general manager system is the fact that it brings

about co-ordination of the three departments. At least that is the object sought when a club decides to employ a general manager.

During the days when money was a minor consideration in golf organizations, each department could operate in complete isolation of other departments, because waste was not considered. Co-operation between departments was desirable, but in too many cases it did not exist. Yet co-operation will bring all the desired effects of co-ordination.

Many of the clubs fortunate enough to have the proper co-operation of department heads previous to the depression have found that it is extremely difficult to lower their operating costs at this time. This simply indicates that such clubs were being handled in a business-like way. The membership was enjoying a dollar's worth of service for every dollar paid in dues. They still are enjoying the maximum of service for their dollar.

The other side of the story is not so pleasant. Where co-operation did not exist, waste was bound to occur. To eliminate that waste committeemen of some clubs insisted on the general manager plan, and in some cases a saving of money was made, but such saving necessitated the sacrifice of the objects for which their money was spent.

A good golf course, good clubhouse service, good instruction and honest dealing in the pro's shop are the objects desired by the average club members. The preparation of chicken a-la-king, the correct golf swing and the cultural practice of fertilization are extreme points of the triangle. It is commonly accepted that there may be some parallel between instruction and turf culture, but a little more far-fetched, possibly, is the thought of mixing dining room service with either of the other two.

Pro-Greenkeeper-Pro?

Assuming that some parallel may exist between turf culture and golf instruction brings us to the subject of the pro-greenkeeper or greenkeeper-pro, as you like it. The greenkeeper-pro is a necessity in the small club where the proper maintenance of the pro's shop and the demand for instruction requires only a part of one individual's time. The pro-greenkeeper must cope with a real problem during mid-summer days when teaching time is in demand and course maintenance problems

are pressing. Pro-greenkeepers know that at such time it is practically impossible to render all the services as they should be rendered. At such times he becomes truly a greenkeeper-pro rather than a pro-greenkeeper.

There is little merit in either side of the argument that a man in such position should be called a pro-greenkeeper or a greenkeeper-pro. Financial considerations being even, every pro-greenkeeper would rather be a professional, and every greenkeeper-pro would rather be a greenkeeper. Financial considerations are imperative, but too many of our pros and greenkeepers are selfish in these considerations. A man gifted primarily to be a greenkeeper should be reluctant to accept a pro position, and vice-versa. Financial considerations often influence a good pro to look with hungry eye at the additional revenue to be obtained by taking over the greenkeeper's job. The invariable result is that the club suffers, for the pro finds himself out of line in the greenkeeper's job if his services as an instructor are in demand.

On the other hand the greenkeeper is often envious of the pro's position. Such envy at a well managed club is ridiculous, for as a prominent pro-greenkeeper told me not long ago, the greenkeeper is more essential to the operation of the club than the pro. Under normal conditions friction between a professional and a greenkeeper should never exist.

Knifing Doesn't Pay.

Present conditions are not normal. Men of both professions are having sword-on-a-hair nightmares. Whether or not one individual will try to knife his fellow worker depends upon his character and foresight. Free use of foresight will always indicate that knifing is a poorly paying sport. The knifed one suffers first, the club suffers immediately afterward, and sooner or later the knifer will find his neck in a noose.

This sort of thing can easily be eliminated in any well managed organization. Men who refuse to co-operate faithfully should have no consideration in any club. Co-operation of pro and greenkeeper is a very simple matter, and all parties concerned, including the entire membership, benefit by such use of brains. Many pages could be written on ways and means of co-operation, but a few illustrations will indicate the possibilities. These illustrations are actual accomplishments.

A greenkeeper volunteered to put the

mechanical division of his department at the service of his pro. The pro found that his shop efficiency improved miraculously when his mechanical equipment operated properly. A pro's suggestion on the alteration of a green cut maintenance costs on that green 15 per cent, and made it far more playable. A clubhouse manager asked the greenkeeper to supply him with boughs for decorating the clubhouse. Trimming of certain trees on the course improved the beauty of the layout and supplied the boughs. A pro made up some unique menu forms that advertised his shop. A saving in the house and additional business for the pro was the result.

Team-work that Pays.

A pro saved the job of a greenkeeper by timely opinions expressed to the members at a time when the forces of nature were all opposed to the successful maintenance of the course. A greenkeeper made an arrangement with the pro to return all balls found by the maintenance force. The result was a profit to the pro for returned balls on a reward basis. Many more incidents of this type come to mind, but they all indicate but one thing; the value of co-operation.

It is obvious that every man is more gifted along one line of endeavor than another. After the long drag, the unselfish use of such ability will find him smiling and successful. Square dealing is still a virtue, and is paying bigger dividends every day as we pass thru this morass of depression. Graft and selfishness go hand in hand, and both are producers of waste. Waste will have to be eliminated, but graft and selfishness should be scrapped as the first move to bring about the better condition. A little more altruism and a lot less pessimism on the part of all golf employees will answer to a large degree the question of the fall report on the golf business.

Western Michigan Pros Band in New Group

ABOUT 15 PROS assembled at the Battle Creek (Mich.) C. C., April 25, as guests of E. W. Harbert, Battle Creek pro, and formed the Western Michigan Professional Golfers association. Frank Sprogell, Kent C. C., Grand Rapids, was elected president; E. W. Harbert, secretary-treasurer, and Frank Kennett, Kalamazoo C. C., chairman of tournaments committee. Directors elected are the officers and

Louis Shiapetta, Jackson; Blake Miller, Lansing; George Tuttle, Muskegon.

Purpose of the organization is to bring the Western Michigan pros together for neighborhood tournament play and confabs more frequently, as the state's western pros could not make the events held in the eastern part of the state. This organization has no connection with the national or Michigan state PGA, although most of its present members are affiliated with the national and state bodies. Some of the members of the new organization, it is expected, will become members of the state-wide body as a result of the contacts made possible by the new arrangement.

Early season business for the Western Michigan pros' has been held back by a cold, dark spring, according to reports at the Battle Creek session, but the boys are keyed up and confident they will get through the season in reasonably good shape as the sun has to shine some time.

Golf Official Gives Bright Business News

A. C. HOPKINS, veteran Scripps-Howard newspaper man and syndicate feature writer, writes the *Spoon*, house organ of the Maketwah C. C. (Cincinnati district), to hand out some dope on the general business situation. Hop's hunch is just simple enough to listen convincing to us. He states:

"I'm still a believer in the return of better business. For one thing the world is out of everything. I mean that, literally, and I'm one. We, millions of us, need new cars, clothes, carpets, rugs, shoes, and God knows what. There are ten million buildings in the country that are crying for paint. I'll not live as did my old grandfather Hopkins. He never earned more than \$1.50 a day in his hard life. He existed and he never really lived. I demand luxuries, comforts, the highest standard of living and you can multiply me by millions. Just give us the smallest kind of a break and see us hop into the market and begin buying things.

"I'm damned if we will take perpetual economizing on the chin. I have run my car 54,000 miles. I can get along but I don't wish to get along. My assistant has 53,000 miles on his dial. He is a potential customer. I went home with a prominent realtor the other night. His car has done 101,000 miles, and he's waiting. There is an army of us."