



A Fresh Look at the Old Jobs

By TOM E. DOUGHERTY

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BACK IN THE days when Chick Evans was all-around champion, when President Wilson was being re-elected because he had kept us out of the war and when a depression was just a low place in the ground, I began to carry golf bags at the Springhaven club on the outskirts of Philadelphia. Since that time we have won a war which is yet to be paid for, enacted the Eighteenth amendment, and I have plodded along until today I am manager of the club.

The Editor of GOLFDOM suggests that out of this experience I might write a readable summary of the various activities and responsibilities of a golf club staff, and who am I that I should disagree?

As I began my career as a caddie that seems to be a good place to start, so let's take a look at the boys. If man or woman has any temperament, it will be in evidence on the golf course, and the training, appearance and management of the boys in the caddie house are reflected in the enjoyment of the game by the club members. Having seen many plans tried, I am very much in favor of the number system for caddies. Each boy, when he reports in the morning, is given a number and the caddies take their turn going out. This does away with any charge of favoritism. No caddie should be allowed to carry a bag until he has had proper training. The average boy learns quickly and if he is given a little instruction and then sent out

in a foursome with experienced boys carrying the other bags no member will know or care that his boy is a "rookie."

Get Kids Interested

Leaving a few experienced boys at the caddie house to take care of early players, our caddie-master on Saturday morning takes the new boys and a few older ones out to the practice green and there gives them a demonstration of how to take the flag and go through what is something of a golf ritual. I am usually present at these classes myself and try to see that the new boy not only learns the rules but also develops an enthusiasm for his work. A sullen, indifferent or lazy boy is a handicap to any club. As a means of better morale, I am very much in favor of caddie tournaments and prizes for excellent work and good appearance. The matter of appearance should receive a great deal of em-

Tom Dougherty

genial and able graduate from the caddie ranks, reviews his 17-year climb from club-lugging to the management of the club where he started as a boy. You'll note from his emphasis of caddie training and welfare that he hasn't forgotten those early days.

What Dougherty has decided from a managerial perspective of departmental operation may help put these departmental jobs in sharper focus with the men who are handling them as well as with club officials.

phasis. Most of the boys carrying golf clubs are poor, but they can keep their shoes neat, their hands and faces clean, and their clothes, though worn, can be patched and made presentable. The sight of a boy meandering across the course with a knee buckle flapping or a tattered shirt sleeve waving in the wind is enough to put any golfer off his game.

I would like to see every club have a caddie committee composed of members of the club and charged with the general responsibility of caddie matters. This would result, first, in better service from the boys, which would benefit all club members; furthermore, it would be of immense value to the caddies because many of them are sadly in need of some association with sympathetic men of affairs; and, finally, it would be of value to members of the committee as it would open up to them a new field of opportunity for service to their community. I do not mean to make the club in any sense a charitable institution, but am only suggesting that the membership of our clubs take the interest in their employes that any forward-looking business organization does—and the caddies outnumber the other club employes ten to one.

The next in line of organization is the caddie-master, a sort of non-commissioned officer of the club army. He should be chosen very carefully and, if possible, from the group of caddies of long service. In any such group will be found an older boy who, not by bullying but by force of character and personality, has assumed a certain leadership. Such a boy impressed with his responsibilities and given authority that is actual as well as apparent, because of his acquaintance with the members and the course, should soon develop into a highly valuable person.

If the caddie-master is to measure up to the full responsibilities of his job, he must be a year-around employe of the club. There must be a sense of permanency to his position and his pay should be enough to enable him to live in modest comfort. He should be allowed a day off every week, when some other employe can take charge of his duties. I am also in favor of the caddie-master having the concession for selling frankfurters, soft drinks, ice cream, etc., to the caddies, which will enable him to add a little to his income and will keep the boys away from the clubhouse. It may be asserted that this will put him in a position to victimize the boys by forcing them to spend money, but I have always

insisted that if you cannot trust an employe you had better discharge him, because there are more honest people than there are crooks and we can find honest employes if we will but look for them.

Greenkeeper Ranking Man

We come now to the greenkeeper, in my opinion the most important man around any golf club. He has charge of a more valuable plant and he spends in a year more dollars than a great many of the club members. The greenkeeper today suffers from the fact that in the early days of golf he was little more than a gardener and his prestige has not grown as fast as his duties. I prefer to call him a golf course superintendent, as that title is more in keeping with his responsibilities. He must be very much a business man, something of a botanist, something of an entomologist, something of a mechanic, and have a smattering of other trades and professions.

No superintendent can spend his whole time on his own course and be worth very much to his club. It is important to have a foreman to look after routine details, leaving the superintendent free to watch for the ninety and nine things that interfere with the perfect green and to learn ways and means of preventing or curing the ills to which golf courses are heir.

There are some clubs that will not allow their superintendent to play the course, when, in my opinion, the green-committee should insist that he play. Without wishing to criticize his game, I will say that playing golf will take the superintendent to parts of the course which otherwise he would never see. He should be encouraged to attend the short classes given by many of our state colleges on the proper care of greens. He should go to the district and national conventions of golf course executives and his necessary expenses should be paid. For, say what we will, there are a great many problems of greenkeeping still unsolved, with new ones developing every season; and from an interchange of ideas and experiences, the superintendent will get more information of value to his club than he can obtain any other way.

Jeopardizing Course Investment

With a decrease in club membership, and consequently in income, during the last two seasons, golf course superintendents have been haunted by the spectre of economy and more than one is waking up

in the night and picking at the covers. It is right and proper that every possible economy should be made in the club, but I suggest to members in general and to chairmen of green-committees in particular that they remember that the club course represents a very large initial investment on which hundreds of thousands of dollars have been expended. Any economy which jeopardizes this investment and which will lay on the club in the future a burden of rehabilitation is poor business. For this reason, I suggest that the man responsible for the greens be asked to make up a budget showing, if necessary, the minimum cost at which the course can be maintained in good shape. I suggest further that he sit in with the green-committee at its regular meetings and that any reduction in his budget be made only after a full discussion of the matter with him. For what with the members is only an avocation, is with him a life-long profession.

When it comes to the purchase of equipment, I am inclined to say the club should buy nothing that a member sells. If the superintendent wants to buy a Woofus tractor and is persuaded to take a Goofus tractor because it is made by one of the club officers, trouble is pretty sure to result and the club will suffer. If the machine does not work satisfactorily the superintendent will not want to pick a row with a man who may be chairman of the green-committee next year. Again it may be said that the superintendent who is allowed to select the tractor or sprayer or truck that he wants may be inclined to make a few dollars on the side by the purchase. Such things have happened. But if a club cannot trust its superintendent to spend money honestly it had better fire him, because he inevitably must spend considerable sums and it is impossible to check up on him completely.

No Good "Cheap" Men

There is no such thing as a good, cheap golf course superintendent. The club that tries to save a thousand dollars when hiring such a man stands a good chance to lose ten times that much in mismanagement of its course. The same thing applies to the purchase of equipment. Within the last few years I have spent more than a quarter of a million dollars for my club, and have never yet found a "bargain." I believe I have spent this sum wisely and economically, but I have never

gotten something worth ten dollars at a cost of only five.

Let me presume to make one suggestion to club presidents. Human nature being what it is, there are some men whose dispositions are incompatible. It has sometimes happened that a man has been appointed chairman of the green-committee when it has already been demonstrated that he cannot work with the golf course superintendent without friction. Regardless of the effect on the two men, the result cannot but be harmful to the club and to the welfare of the playing members. If there is only one member who is competent to be chairman of the committee and he cannot get along with the superintendent, the alternative is to get a new superintendent, which is the most expensive thing a club can do. The ideal arrangement is to get a good chairman and keep him. He will get a good superintendent and keep him and the club will prosper.

Pro the Sunshine Salesman

Now let's step into the pro shop, where we can meet every playing member almost every time he comes out to the club. He is the man who, more than any other individual, can keep old members happy and attract new members to the club. He can do this principally by giving lessons and by frequently giving advice or suggestions without charge. The average golf club has little use for the "playing pro," by which I mean a man whose principal energies are devoted to competition. It is an unhappy fact that a great many professionals do not want to give lessons and try to avoid this very necessary function as much as possible. This is an unfortunate situation for a club because he is the one man who can take the dub or youthful player and so stimulate his interest in golf that he will remain and pay dues instead of getting disheartened and dropping out. Several articles in GOLFDOM have touched on this point and I recommend them highly.

The pro should have a fully equipped shop with a popular line of balls, clubs and accessories. It is a mistake to try to run the shop on a shoestring. A little thought and effort will get members to turn to the pro first when in need of these things. A few years ago a great demand developed for matched sets and they are undoubtedly an advantage. However, at present there seems to be a trend toward the unmatched set and I think pros do well to carry in-

dividual clubs to sell to the member who does not like his matched No. 2 iron or finds his putter not to his fancy. Unfortunately, some pros are not good business men and fail to make money because their stock is not properly selected or because they do not take advantage of liberal discounts allowed for prompt payment of their bills.

Against Pro-Greenkeeping

Having said what the pro should be, let me say just a word as to what he should not be. He should not have anything to do with the upkeep or management of the course itself. That is entirely the function of the golf course superintendent and the latter should not be interfered with. It was Napoleon who said that one poor general was better than two good ones.

Concerning the operation of the clubhouse, the most important thing in my mind is that the management of the clubhouse and the management of the course should be kept entirely separate. They have little or nothing in common. The clubhouse operates principally as a restaurant and, because of the irregularity of its patronage and the need for a good grade of service, it can seldom be run on a paying basis. But just as the railroads run their dining car service at a loss to attract passenger traffic, so must a golf club be reconciled to running its restaurant at a loss so that the members who pay dues will find their membership worth while. The buying of supplies for the clubhouse should be entirely apart from the buying of machinery, fertilizer or other material for the course. If the greenkeeper's truck is used to haul ashes out of the basement, the house account should be debited and the greens account credited with this expense.

A Doubtful Expedient

We come now to the last position, that of club manager, which place I fill, and I say with all sincerity that I don't believe there should be any such animal. Of course, unusual times such as the present call for unusual methods and my club is economizing by placing me in charge of the entire plant. Because of my long association here, I am able to carry water on both shoulders more expertly than if I had come into the position from outside. But I regard the management of a golf course and the management of a clubhouse as being widely separated functions and

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think the expedient of a "General Manager" a very doubtful one.

The golf course superintendent should be directly responsible to the management of the club in the person of the chairman of the green-committee. The house steward should be responsible to the management in the person of the chairman of the house-committee and any intermediate person is quite likely to be superfluous.

In closing, I have one generalization to make, and I think it one of the most important things I have said. It is: When you are compelled to economize, cut down your force as much as necessary by discharging the least competent, and raise the pay of those who remain. Well, I did not expect you to agree with me, but I have arrived at that point after 17 years of travel.

USUAL ONE-WEEK course in Turf Management will be offered this winter by Rutgers University, College of Agriculture, New Brunswick, N. J., and green-chairmen, greenkeepers and others interested in attending this short course should write to the Director of Short Courses for full particulars. The date for the turf management course is Feb. 20 to March 4, 1933.

OGDEN, UTAH, through Commissioner W. J. Rackham, reports a profit on the first year's operation of El Monte municipal course of \$1,110. This figure is for the four and one-half months from April 1 to August 15, during which time total income was \$3,123 and upkeep expense \$2,012.