

General Managers Testify to Merit of One-Man Control

IT SEEMS to have been demonstrated in a fairly convincing manner that the general management plan of country club operation has proved its logic during the trying seasons of 1931 and 1932.

Several difficulties that made adoption of the general management idea questionable are gradually vanishing, so further extension of this principle of operation is assured. One of the first handicaps the idea had to overcome was the lack of men of temperament and training fitting them for general management of country clubs. This has been overcome to a marked measure by the broader and more sympathetic study of various departmental operations by men who formerly confined their attention to simply their own phase of the club's activities.

Experience with the general management plan has revealed that salary-cut fears of department heads under general manager have been unfounded. Unless a general manager has been able to select and keep enthusiastically interested his department heads he is doomed from the start. Naturally the best way for him to keep his associates on their toes is to let them know their jobs and salaries are safe when their work is well done and that they may share in the financial benefits of centralized management when good times return.

Admittedly one of the reasons for the success of general management during the last two years is that club officials have selected their general managers with more business care and less political influence than marked department head employment in the old easy-going times. Now, when a good man has been selected he is permitted to manage.

General Managers Testify

Some interesting testimony on the workings of the general management policy come to GOLFDOM in recent letters from men who have registered as successful general managers.

Here is the comment of one general manager who came up through the green-keeping ranks:

"There have been times when I have

made mental reservations as to the soundness of some of the articles appearing in GOLFDOM, but the one in a recent issue headed, "Department Team Work Right Route to Club Economy," causes me to take direct exception.

"It is accepted that lax methods in times of prosperity have lowered the standard of efficiency in many clubs and that the shrinkage in income during the past two seasons has been and is now being viewed with alarm by many boards of directors.

"This condition being true, is it any wonder that a club board intrusted with the operation of a property, the minimum requirements of which necessitate the expenditure of many thousands of dollars per year, is willing to consider the idea of general management?

"The writer of 'Club Teamwork' states this general management idea a fallacy and that club departments are more economically operated by individuals. By what right he writes as an authority I do not know. To criticize a system so new as it relates to golf clubs one must have made the attempt and failed or at least have made a study of the failures.

"A golf club, though not chartered for profit, is like any other corporation, a business to be conducted along progressive lines if it is to survive.

"A past president of our club, himself general manager of a business that contacts the entire continent and a nationally known man in his profession sponsored the idea of my being put in full charge of the entire property. The year prior to the change the club was assessed \$50 per member to make up the operating deficit for that year. Last year with a reduced income in evidence I made a departmental budget to conform with conditions that would exist before the end of the fiscal year. By Sept. 1st we had a \$4,000 operating surplus and at the close of the year after all replacements were written off we were well in the black.

"This past winter the true condition of affairs being more plainly evident and knowing last year's income could not be



Don't let this happen to your clubhouse. Fire hazards increase in the fall, what with fireplaces lighted, added heat required to keep the building comfortably warm, fewer employes around to put out flying sparks, and high winds to fan the flames. Check up on your fire-fighting equipment now!

hoped for we budgeted accordingly. Even this budget allowed for \$1,200 major repairs in cafe, a car of fertilizer and power cost to pump 750,000 gallons of water per day. All usual items were cared for.

No Superman Needed

"This preparation and the follow through does not call for a superman, merely the application of common sense to a problem so income and expense balance and the most efficient way in which to arrive at this balance.

"Our present condition could not have been arrived at without the aid of boards who were unselfish in their motives. They have been in full accord with all plans to keep the club up to its standard and yet remain within income.

"Clubs that are now being efficiently operated by departmental heads should be content to remain as they are, but for those whose departments are constantly developing leaks that lead to a red balance the idea of a general manager could well be entertained."

Troubles Fault of Management

Another successful general manager of a prominent mid-western metropolitan district club came along from the house end but for years he has been an earnest student of all phases of golf club operation. His advice is sought by professionals and greenkeepers because of his broad and sound view of their problems.

You will note in his comments he has decided a golf club is mainly for golf and

emphasizes excellence of course condition as an essential for maintaining the membership roster at a high figure. With no membership problem and active play the pro is given the chance he requires to make a profit.

This general manager expresses himself as follows:

"For more than 2 years I have been general manager of ——— C. C. with complete control. I have been greatly interested in reading your many articles pertaining to the operation of country clubs, particularly those referring to the problems many have had during the past year. To my mind many of such problems can be credited to poor management. We surely are having none here at ——— as we ended 1931 with 65 more members than we had in 1930 and on June 1, 1932, we had 21 more members than on the same date in 1931. Our income on that date was more than \$4,000 greater than 1931. In addition we raised our dues in 1931 and again in 1932. That does not sound like depression, does it?"

"I lay much of the credit for our success to the policy we have of putting the most of our income into our course upkeep. You will note we spent 33% of our total costs in that department while the general average is but 20%. My policy is to keep the golf course in the pink of condition and dues as low as possible, and membership problems will not exist.

"In the fall of 1930 I installed a complete water system at a cost under \$15,000.

1931 OPERATING COSTS.

	1931 cost	Per cent of total cost
Golf Course Expense—		
Labor, light and power, sand and black dirt, seed, fertilizer, gas and oil, repairs, course improvements, general expense	\$12,361.52	33
Golf Expense—		
Salary, register clerk; salary, caddy master; golf supplies, golf prizes, association dues, general golf expense	2,322.33	06
Clubhouse Expense—		
Salary, janitor; salaries, locker boy and maid; supplies, locker room, linen and laundry, fuel, lights, power, water, magazines and papers, miscellaneous supplies, repairs, general clubhouse expense	5,286.74	14
Administrative Expense—		
Manager's salary, office salaries, postage, printing, office supplies, telephone and telegraph, bad debts, collection expense, general expense	9,642.02	26
Property Expense—		
Taxes, insurance, depreciation	7,739.89	21
Total cost	\$37,352.51	100
Total club income..	\$47,245.35	

total investment in our property is approximately \$250,000. We do not try to save at the expense of service to our members, but we find that constant care gives better service and at a lower cost. Now why is all this possible? Not because I have an unusual amount of ability, but because this institution is operated on a one-man-control basis. What business institution could exist without a head? Golf clubs did for many years because they were riding a wave of prosperity, but now they are getting shaky and some will not weather the storm. A good sound business man as an executive manager and at a substantial salary is a sound investment in these times."

The 1931 operating costs of this general manager's plant are shown in the table herewith. How do they look to you as good balance for first-class club operation? Notice there is around 21% of the total income left available for interest, amortization and other capital costs.

WHAT A BREAK!

Greenkeeper Gets One of Those Deals That Only Happen in Story Books

ONCE UPON a time, and this is no fooling a greenkeeper had everything work out so well that the guy is pinching himself to see if his name is MacGregor.

John MacGregor is superintendent at Chicago Golf club. Chicago Golf has a great course but its greens are *poa annua* and *poa* greens are like the little gal with the curl in the middle of her forehead, when they are good they are very, very good and when they are bad they are horrid—if they are at all.

Mac had figured out the answer to the annual dive of *poa annua* was cocoos bent greens but no definite action was contemplated by the club.

This year again the *poa* went out, despite religious adherence to practice recommended by authorities for its preservation. Instead of identifying himself as this—or a—No. 1 expert on greens to be brought in as a consultant Mac simply suggested that the *poa annua* greens be replaced, but added that before any action was taken on his recommendation leading authorities in the district were to be conferred with.

Harold Scott, president of Chicago Golf

During 1931 we watered not only our greens, tees, fairways, etc., but also all our trees and shrubs in the rough as well as supplying water for the clubhouse. Our fairways were like velvet all season while most other clubs in this vicinity were burned out. We deposited over 75 million gallons of water on our fairways alone. The total cost for this is included in our course upkeep item and it is extremely low.

"I have found it possible to give more to our members in course upkeep condition and clubhouse service each year, and at a slightly reduced cost each year. The