

migration, so these obstacles all work against any form of budget and are utterly impossible to forecast.

Many greenkeepers will be forced to spend their appropriations more carefully whether they are taking care of an old course or a new one. Due to the budget being slashed it will take longer to bring a new course into good condition because of the more cautious methods of spending, but good results can be obtained by a gradual scheme of building up. Six fairways can be fertilized and topdressed each year. Some of the trees can be fertilized, pruned

and treated every year. A quantity of sand can be put into the traps each season. A just amount of depreciation of machinery can be charged off yearly. Some funds should be set aside for old and new construction work. A green might need remodeling or some new trees should be planted. Such a gradual development of improving your golf course will fix a standard budget each year. It will help to do away with deficits and overspending. What is saved on each year's budget can be set aside for depressing times such as we have been going through.

# Revamping Golf Courses Today Requires Real Economies

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**I**T IS true enough that hundreds of golf courses could stand a lot of revamping and reconstructing and that alterations would make the game more interesting for hundreds of thousands of players. A necessary preliminary in each instance of rehabilitation, however, is the dull job of balancing the country club budget.

The first great change in everything relating to golf courses came about 1903 and 1904, when the old gutta percha ball went into the discard, and was superseded by the Haskell ball, with a hard rubber core. The game lengthened drives, and in fact, all shots, many yards, and many players had to adjust themselves to new conditions, because of the ball's liveliness. Naturally, this brought a necessity for rehabilitating end lengthening the courses.

This meant purchase of more land, and almost every club faced the problem. Careful consideration was given all plans, but by 1910 the reconstruction generally was well under way. It was about this time, I believe, that the big golf "boom" began. The game grew by leaps and bounds. It was about this time, too, that the first fairway power mower was introduced.

Many of those courses rebuilt 20 to 25 years ago have stood well the test of time; they remain, today, fairly modern and interesting. Others have lost their attraction; clubs find their members drifting away to other organizations with more recently built layouts. Then, too, we have the clubs that started modestly with 9-hole courses, desiring at the time of organization only a "place to knock the ball around." Members of these younger clubs

soon want a real course, and eventually, have to dig down in their pockets and build one.

So the subject of rehabilitation, reconstruction and enlargement is always with us. It is a matter that requires a great deal of study. Primarily, the club's officials, who must shoulder the responsibility for whatever is done, should consider first the size of their pocketbook.

The club that has the vision and the money to buy the best expert knowledge, and supervision, as a rule always gets the best results and has to worry the least of the future. If the course is built of championship caliber and on proper land, with favorable soil conditions, so that maintenance costs will not be excessive, that course is destined for success.

## False-Alarm Bargains

The clubs that suffer the most, in my opinion, are those clubs that, with rehabilitation in mind, seek the most for the least amount of money. They generally wind up confronted with everything wrong, and have to begin all over again. Experience has been a great teacher, and in the era of inflation and overproduction, from 1920 to 1930, there were formed some golf course contracting companies that I blame, along with too credulous club officials, for disastrous results. Eventually new expenditures of money were necessary to correct conditions that, if the job hadn't been let out on too close a margin, would have been right in the first place. It seems to be true that you get what you pay for and no more.

I am not a believer in contracting golf course work. I believe in the old time

\*Digest of Greens Convention address.

practice. My suggestion to any club contemplating changes is to secure the services of a competent architect and greenkeeper. Hold your architect responsible for the planning and framework of putting greens, driving tees, traps, etc. Then the greenkeeper should be held responsible to the architect in supervising this part of the work. He should employ whatever equipment and labor is necessary at the lowest possible figure. After the plans are completed, the job is the greenkeeper's. He knows the texture of his soil, what are its requirements, and what it will take to bring it to perfection. If he grows up with the course, he is familiar with every detail from the beginning. I am sure there are many clubs that can vouch for the success of this practice, who have learned that it is more satisfactory and much more economical.

### Build from Bottom Up

You have often read articles about certain individuals building a standard 18-hole course at a cost that would hardly begin to purchase the grass seed, fertilizer, and galvanized pipe in our district. These articles read well, but if you take time to go and investigate, you will find that these projects generally are built from the top down instead of the bottom up. Whether building old or new golf courses, one of the most expensive mistakes a club can make is the above type of construction. Experience has taught me that wherever this kind of construction has been practiced, it has meant beginning all over again. If club executives, who have their club welfare at heart, give the proper attention to procuring the right set-up to solve their problem, they will save money in the end.

It also can be said that there are many clubs today striving to correct a wrong start, that would have been much better off if they had started more modestly. In the beginning, they were not financially ready, but they insisted on having a full length 18-hole layout. It is the old story of "keeping up with the Joneses." A club that hasn't reached the backing to build a real 18-hole layout should do the next best thing—construct nine holes, and build them right. You can always add to a golf course, but trying to straighten out 18 holes that are a hopeless hodge-podge of mistakes, is a task that requires real financing. I should think a club member would prefer nine holes well built than 18 gone to destruction through trying to stretch \$50,000 to \$75,000.

### Taxes Are Vital Factor

There is just one more thought I would bring to your attention, having to do with the matters of accessibility and tax rates.

There are often clubs located near city limits that have contemplated making alterations on their courses. They hire the best architect possible to recommend his ideas, and when he begins to deal with the problem, he generally concludes by seeking from the club executives information as to land valuation. This is the deciding factor in making his report. If the information is unfavorable, a conscientious architect tells the club the truth. He advises them to sell out and get another site, further from the city. If, with an excessive tax valuation, he goes ahead with the work, the membership soon finds itself burdened with high dues, assessments, and you hear the complaint about the high cost of golf. This is bad for the game; it creates the impression that only millionaires can play. What the members of these highly accessible clubs are paying for is not golf, but for the upkeep of their property.

I bring up this point because it may happen that in the audience are greenkeepers or members of clubs that are studying rehabilitation problems. Or it may be, that some of you come from clubs that are faced with virtual extinction because of diminishing revenue in the face of taxes that refuse to come down to any appreciable degree. There is but one solution; to give up the club built on expensive land, and start again elsewhere.

If your club board of directors has in mind any extensive alteration of your golf course, study the problem yourself, then go to your chairman of greens, or whoever you deal with, and make yourself heard. If he has in mind hiring some alleged authority on golf construction who you know to be a "shyster" tell him the danger of such a procedure. Go over the course with him, and show him how much money it will cost to do the job well—to have interesting greens and hazards, and to carpet the fairways with real turf. Try to find out how much the club intends spending, and figure out for yourself whether it will do the job. If you are convinced the money allotted will not cover materials and labor, speak your mind. Better to have an old-fashioned course, well kept up, than a fancy new one with only a few blades of grass here and there.

I do not advise any reconstruction. Far from it, I hope that there will be much rehabilitation in the next few years; it will make more work for the bona fide architects, seed salesmen, and the equipment manufacturer, and the wideawake and progressive greenkeeper. But, being an architect and greenkeeper myself, I would be a poor business man, if, even in these times, I attempted to encourage haphazard jobs and slipshod work that, in the end, would help none of us. If the club has the money and if conditions are correct—go ahead; if not—forget it.