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Appreciation of Officials' Work Will Help Clubs

IT'S ABOUT time someone gave applause to officials of golf clubs who have carried these enterprises through a desperate crisis of almost four years' duration.

Taken by and large, private golf clubs are in better shape than they have been for many years. Many of them are in much sounder financial shape than before the depression, when the annual assessment was considered inevitable. Many of them are getting back to the old days of waiting lists, now that initiation fees and dues have been brought down substantially by drastic economies. Whether some of these economies are being carried beyond the limits warranted by foresight remains to be seen.

Most of the cuts, however, have been enforced by the necessity of preserving the club. The greenkeeper, pro or manager who thinks he is being picked on or being compelled to operate obsolete equipment with agonizing wastes, just because the club officials are chronically tight, often would have his opinion altered if he were to acquaint himself with the true facts of his club's condition.

A private golf club usually is organized to operate "not for profit." Consequently when a club at the end of the year shows a profit of several thousand dollars, after interest, depreciation, amortization and other charges have been paid and a rea-

sonable amount of operating capital laid aside, the administration policies may be questioned. Either the members should be given advantage of the surplus, the plant kept up to better standards or the club employees be paid a wage commensurate with able, faithful service and their enforced loss of income during the closed season.

Plodders Are Silent

But the clubs that have had tough going and have been kept alive by the expert, patient plodding of able men who work without pay, haven't been registering any fat balances. They have ended the year in the black, but not by any wide margin.

All of these men have had plenty to do in connection with their own businesses. They have sacrificed time and energy to work their clubs into stronger positions. Hours during the day and many evenings are devoted to the cause of the clubs, but these officials make no boast of achievement and seldom, if ever, get any applause for the work they are doing.

Their plight is something to be considered by the greenkeepers, professionals and managers who are inclined to believe they have a corner on misery connected with golf club operation.

The president sees that the club needs members and money. He worries about those deficiencies. The green-chairman knows that the course ought to have a lot

of work done on it and that many items of equipment and supplies are urgently needed. He realizes perfectly that the better the course, the more members it will attract. But he still can't spend what he hasn't got.

The house-chairman meanwhile, knows that his department always stands in danger of losing big money; he too must play close to the line or be unqualified for the responsibility with which he has been entrusted. Beer is now giving him and the manager a great deal of hope. At many clubs the beverage volume is twice what it was before beer came in. However, handling costs are heavy, especially with bottled beer, and many clubs haven't been able to put in bars for the serving of longer-profit draught beer. Beer has brought about an increase in restaurant volume at many clubs and that's helping the house-chairman and the managers work their way back to sunshine.

The treasurer, poor devil, has about the toughest job of all. He wants to keep the club's credit good and provide funds to operate profitably. He knows the members intimately, so must suffer the embarrassment of being the Shylock to people with whom his relations normally are purely social. However, he has no alternative. A golf club which was brought in to being for pleasure, turns out to be the hardest-hearted commercial enterprise in the world. No matter how much money the delinquent member spent in the "good old days when he had it," the treasurer has to turn the NSF guy out into the air and hope that a new member will come along as replacement material.

Thus, the work of the officials at every turn is beset with grief and tedious detail. May the present circumstances remind members as well as department heads, of the problems officials face and bring about a greater and more profitable harmony within many clubs.

To show how the earnest officials feel about their labors, we quote from a letter recently received from the president of a representative midwestern club.

Give Us a Break

It may be rather unkind for me to criticize anything published in GOLFDOM, considering the excellent things which you publish therein, but I am a little uneasy at the sentiment expressed in the article by Carl Horn, beginning on Page 7 in the June number.

I have been concerned in the past over articles reflecting the same sentiment in one way or the other: That club directors through lack of wisdom or lack of understanding or lack of something or other, are abusing the greenkeeper and neglecting the club.

I must admit I would be pleased to see an article or several articles expressing a little sympathy for the directors who have given freely of their time, business experience, and efforts during the past two or three years to save for their communities country clubs which were needed when times were prosperous and will again be needed when times become more nearly normal. In all instances these clubs represent a heavy investment on the part of citizens of the community, which will be lost to the community if the club fails to operate even for one season.

I am serving my fifth year as president of a club in exactly the situation outlined above. I appreciate the compliment, of course, but would cheerfully have allowed some other man to have this honor in my place; however, some of my misguided friends over-persuaded me to continue. That is another story, however.

To get back to this matter of these cold-blooded and inefficient directors. Let me say most emphatically that I have never seen a group of men in any civic work plan and scheme and work as our directors have done to preserve our club property, and I am sure our situation can be considered as typical of many others over the country.

We have a greenkeeper who has been at the club for many years and who has been our greenkeeper for several years, and we think a lot of him. Scarce as money has been, we have not cut his salary. We very regretfully cut our laborers' rates 2½¢ per hour, and we have urged our superintendent to cut down on his man hours as much as he possibly can, and he has responded wonderfully.

There is no doubt in the world but that we could use several thousand dollars on our course without wasting a penny, and we need some new equipment.

The writer personally has checked this all over many times with the grounds-keeper, who I think understands the situation, and I do not believe would be in accord with the things which Mr. Horn has written as to his directors. I have told our grounds-keeper very frankly, that I



If you are inclined to hook all over the course go to the Blaney Park course in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Mrs. Bob Becker, wife of the noted field and stream authority, took 3 casts at the Blaney Park stream and hooked an 11-inch trout with the fly rod outfit she carries in her golf bag.

hated to cut down on our laborers' pay, that I hated to neglect the club, that it seemed far more sensible to keep the club alive and in reasonably good credit standing in the community.

I wish you would think this over, and see if you do not agree that perhaps a good word should occasionally be said for these directors who give so freely of their time and effort without any compensation other than the good will of their members. In my case I believe I have the confidence of the members, and that is the only thing that makes this task worth while.

Your magazine is being read by our greenkeeper and greenkeepers all over the country. I think our man is too sensible and too loyal to be disturbed in his attitude towards the directors, by anything which he may read, but perhaps here and there this sort of an article may cause some discontent and some friction.

I hardly know why I have written you the letter. About the best reason that I can figure out is that I have put in a lot of time for more than four years into our

club, and I have come to appreciate it as a beautiful piece of property representing the sacrifice of many of my associates in this community, and have also come to appreciate the efforts of my directors.

Let the department heads think over that letter.

MANY CLUBS have the wrong idea about rough. They seem to consider it a hazard although, under the rules of golf, any regulation applying through the fairway is equally applicable in the rough.

Rough should never do more than check the ball which over-reaches the fairway down which it is aimed. It should never be allowed to grow so tall and rank that a ball can be easily lost.

The ideal rough grass is low-growing, drought-resisting and native to the region. It should not form a dense turf, but rather permit a ball to settle down between the individual plants. It should never require mowing or watering.