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Official Shortsight Emphasized By Wet Spring Troubles

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EXCESS RAINFALL during the early part of this season has registered a decided effect on golf business almost everywhere east of the Rockies where the players have been eager to start on their regular routine of searching for pars.

The steady precipitation has drowned out the usual volume of early season business for the pros. Wet week-ends have been the rule. But during the two week-ends that were sunshiny and warm, such a rush of business occurred that some of the pro shops in metropolitan districts were practically sold out of balls by noon Sunday. Despite the number of store sales of cut price clubs that have been held this spring, the pros at private clubs have noticed comparatively few clubs have been bought for their members' bags. It seems like the store sales have had almost all of their effect on fee and public course play, thus demonstrating again the wisdom of having a smart merchandising pro at the pay-play courses, for such a pro not only is going to push the sale of clubs for his own financial salvation but work equally as hard in pushing the sale of rounds of play upon which depend his profits.

Professionals have been especially cheered at the private clubs by noticing the large proportion of new automobiles in the parking spaces at their establishments. This, of course, means that some people have money to spend and the pros intend

to see that part of this available legal tender goes for golf equipment.

A bright rainbow for the course equipment makers is showing after the spring storms. Wet grounds and a rank growth of grass have given the greenkeepers the toughest mowing problem they have had for years. Players have been howling to get on the course and howling harder when balls have been lost right in the middle of fairways that have been too wet to mow. The result has been that the greenkeepers have put equipment to work under conditions that have been too much strain on the antiquated and patched-up machinery with which course operations have been conducted during the past three years.

Rain Selling Course Equipment.

Long, wet grass jamming in the mowers has been the last blow for a lot of equipment. The mowers now are too far gone for repair and will either lie in the scrap pile or be given some desperate patching in the hope that it will go a few more rounds with frequent and expensive stops for repairs.

At one of the good metropolitan district courses the greenkeeper told GOLFDOM's reporter last week there were five pieces of equipment needed daily that were out of service due to collapsing under the strain of the wet weather work. None of

this equipment was less than 6 years old and all of it was overdue for replacement.

Although the club is in good financial shape, with 35 new members who were successfully solicited on the attractions of a course in good condition, the greenkeeper is afraid to make a request for \$1,500 worth of equipment urgently needed. He states his case like this:

"Good Golf or Hollow Guts?"

"They have been drumming economy into me until I can't think about the course being kept in good shape any more. I'm too worried thinking about how we can save a dime. My chairman says he knows the course is going to hell and is bound to show it before the season is out, but when he tells the directors we need something all they answer is that what the club needs is more members and more economy.

"They hacked my salary again this year and if I ask them for a new fairway mower I know they'll say that if I get a new mower I get another cut in salary. The junk we are dragging around the course now has been welded, brazed, riveted, repaired, patched with binder wire, tape, nail, boards and gum until every day of mowing means that the man on the job spends half of his time off the tractor fixing the mower.

"Honestly I would be willing to take another salary cut to help us buy a new mower because the members are beefing and they have a kick coming. They are paying \$150 a year dues and that means they are paying for good golf. But I simply can't stand another cut. Like all the rest of the ordinary folks when tough times came, I have had to pinch hit for those of my family who are even more unfortunate. My wife's brother and his family are staying with us and my mother and an uncle. I can't fire any men of the course because I am cut down to 8 men and they have been picked because they have a flock of people to support themselves, as well as being damn good expert course men who are so desperate for dough I can get them cheap and they'll work overtime without extra money when the course needs it and that is often.

"So you can see that I just haven't got a dime to spare. I have been wanting to get that Green Section book on turf diseases because we have plenty of use for it at our place, but just when I thought I

had the buck and a half I could hold out for it my oldest boy had to have a new pair of pants or go to school with his fanny exposed. His pants were patched up like the course tractor now and would not stand anymore.

"The hell of it all is that the club has more actual cash in the treasury than it ever has had before. The prices of maintenance equipment are bound to go up, not only because of inflation but because the equipment makers all have been losing money to the point where they are making the customer a present of some currency every time they make a sale.

Tough Spot for Greenkeeper.

"In the meanwhile I am losing the reputation as a good greenkeeper that I have spent years in building and I can't help myself. I always have kept my equipment in good condition. That stands to reason, as some of it is 10 years old and still working. But how a man can keep a course so members can enjoy golf when he hasn't equipment to work with, when he hasn't the men he needs or the materials, and when he gets a bad break in weather, I don't know.

"I'm afraid the members are going to kick plenty this year. They can't fire the officials, so I will be the goat. Last year there were complaints about the greens and the fairways from the members. There weren't as many as there should have been at that. I know what was wrong. From 4:30 in the morning, when I got up to see if brown-patch had hit (where we hadn't spent a little money for the necessary protection) until 11 at night, when I got through supervising the watering, patching up the pumping equipment and working over the tractor and mowing equipment, I was on the run trying to keep our course so the members would brag about it and I would keep my job and my reputation. But a man can do just so much.

"Our club is supposed to be 'organized not for profit' so if half of the money it made last year was used in reducing dues and the other half in getting the course in good shape, we'd be much nearer the ideal than we are now.

"It's going to be no consolation to me next year, if I am going to have to look for a new job after being here 11 years, to hear some one say about my present officials, 'they saved some money but they ruined the club.'"