

# Golfdom

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## Business Better? Then Make Good on Your Word

By HARRY RADIX

**A**MONG THE many problems to which the golf club official falls heir when he takes office is that of coordinating sportsmanship and the brutally firm business factor of finance. I have heard it said that private golf clubs do not often live up to the fraternal spirit responsible for their being when a dollar is involved. Regretfully enough we have seen ample basis for this charge during the harsh years of the depression. Members who were good fellows when they had it were summarily ejected from membership when their money got low. It couldn't be helped. Probably the absence of courtesy in handling the regulation formalities of these forfeitures has left some sore spots from which the clubs' reputations may not recover as quickly as may the finances of the former members.

In the meanwhile the officials who were in office during the acute days of the depression and who were burdened with the unhappy responsibility of forfeiting memberships in accordance with the by-laws have finished their terms of office. After having had due time and a detached perspective for reflection many of them have told me that they would have taken a different and more considerate course had they the job to do again. But new officials, unacquainted with such matters, now rule at the clubs, and the mistakes continue to be made. Therein lies one of the sorriest

flaws in the golf clubs' method of management.

Golf clubs are witnessing such definite evidence of general business recovery that attention might well be given by club boards of governors to a review of their

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He is one of the leading business men and prominent sportsmen in the Chicago District.

Radix comments rather than criticizes on a vital point of golf club official policy. The subject is especially timely at many clubs and certainly is not restricted in interest to the Chicago District, although managers in the Chicago area are complaining about losing valued veteran employees because these club workers can get more money washing dishes at A Century of Progress concessions than they can earn at golf clubs after 10 years of service.

former membership lists, bearing in mind that men, rather than money, should be the first consideration of any organization entitled to take pride in its position in the field of sport.

### How Good Is Clubs' Word?

When the depression set in many clubs were prompt to make drastic cuts in the salaries of their department heads. Loyal and competent men and women stuck to the ship. Through their thought and labor the clubs managed to weather the storm. My horizon in the golf field is limited to the Chicago district, with the exception of the cases of some distant clubs with whose members and officials I happen to be acquainted. Speaking of the Chicago district, which I believe is fairly typical of the general metropolitan situation, I am of the opinion that financial operation of private golf clubs in 1933 was on a more substantial, sane and profitable basis than for a number of the pre-depression years.

It would be vain to the point of idiocy for the officials to claim entire credit for this achievement, and I know of no officials who have taken unto themselves sole glory for the salvation. The department heads and other employees have done work at a critical time that I think we would find on close examination approaches the proportions of one of the outstanding feats of the depression. After all, golf clubs are not essential and to keep them operating during times when businesses concerned with the necessities have just managed to drag through, reflects more credit on club operating officials and their staffs than has been given these people by the elective officials or members of golf clubs. But, as I see it, a golf club is not usually the place for credit to be given spontaneously. You who have been through the mill—or are going through—as club officials realize that you consider yourselves lucky if you get only an indifference that permits you to carry out policies and operations for the good of the cause. You are reconciled so you do not protest at the blunt ingratitude which may often be your lot.

### Living on Credit

Our club operating men and women get even less credit than the officials. That makes their credit, net, practically nothing. This might be fair enough were they paid in a manner commensurate with their abilities and efforts but that

they are in most cases, is something that I question.

Those of us who have had what we thought were investments in the hotel field have had opportunities to compare club and hotel salaries. Such comparisons often are shocking in the salaries revealed as being paid to hotel men operating hotels that are in receivership and losing money, and in the bare living wages paid to some club managers whose organizations are "organized not for profit" but still have registered in the black for the last two terrible business years despite unduly large plant investment.

Understand, please, that I do not take the position that these hotel men are over-paid. The conditions require able men and able men demand money for working out a problem. But I do maintain that where the club manager has taken severe cuts and has been promised a readjustment upward when business conditions improved at the club, he should have that promise kept. Of course the same thing goes for the greenkeeper, professional and other employees. The great trouble is that the officials who made the promises have been out of office a year or more and the present officials are in the dark.

Unless the officials of clubs that have regained some of their lost financial ground look into this situation and correct it, I am of the opinion that golf club operation will suffer a severe set-back. We will not be able to attract the type of men we need to operate the departments of our clubs.

Certainly it is true that some clubs still are in bad financial shape and probably are paying in salaries and wages every cent that they can afford. Against them no criticism can apply, but it must be admitted by members and officials of clubs that can pay encouraging and merited money to their help, the figures now do not often show the employees are getting a good sportsmanlike "break."

Discussions about a code for golf clubs I hope reminded club officials of one thing; the unusually long hours their responsible employees had to spend on the job. The work is difficult, too. I am unable to call to mind any of the fine gentlemen with whom I have been associated as a fellow member or official of clubs who would enjoy the routine of being on the job an hour or so after every club party

## FINE EXAMPLE OF LARGE GREEN



Green surface should be ample and the surrounding traps well separated when the player's approach demands a long carry. This green, the second at San Francisco GC, illustrates these desirable characteristics

has finished and then get up after a few hours' sleep to see that everything was ship-shape for the early birds at the club. I know of none of them who would welcome getting up at four a. m. to tour the course looking for signs of turf disease and go to bed at 11 p. m. after supervising the operation of the watering system. None of them would want to work in compost under the blazing sun, and none of them would want to spend hour after hour out on the lesson tee. Working for some one else's pleasure is hard work.

I have heard lately of significant cases that warn us we will have to be considering our deserving employees. In one instance I was informed every one of the course employees of one of our very good clubs in the Chicago district was compelled to live on relief last winter. These men have families. They have small homes in the neighborhood of the clubs. They do skilled work in the application of the various remedies required by fine turf maintenance, and in greens cutting. It would cost a lot of money in labor and in lowering of maintenance standards to train men to replace them each spring; still, the men of the club mentioned to me had to live on charity because they were not paid enough to get by on the most frugal basis during the off season. How many men there were in the district in this plight during the winter I would not attempt to estimate, but the number must

be dismaying. Naturally that is one of the problems of a seasonal business, but the rate of pay these men get during the active season is seldom enough to enable them to provide for their families.

### What's the Answer?

What the answer must be to this problem is beyond me, but I am confident that the official minds of golf clubs can and will get a fairly satisfactory solution when they begin to give it earnest thought.

As a private in the ranks of a golf club's membership, and not speaking as an organization official, I will say that while the problem exists it is with poor sportsmanship and dangerously bad social and business judgment that a golf club official calls attention to his private club showing a good, strong operating profit. A good operating profit with our help well paid is fine. We are entitled to boast of that, but an operating profit at the expense of people who work for true sportsmen is highly improper.

Look over your own situation. If more members, repeal profits, and the general improvement in business conditions warrant it, make good the promise given your employees when their income was reduced. Your club told them that brains, work and fidelity would be rewarded when the storm had passed. As sportsmen and as business men your word must be made good.