

To Please Players, Don't Neglect These Maintenance Details

By T. H. RIGGS-MILLER

IMPORTANT among the problems of the hour which beset green-chairmen, is that of drawing up a budget that will insure satisfactory playing conditions for 1934 and at the same time enable a club to operate within its income.

A survey of golf club expenditures made by the George D. Fish Co. of New York, covering some twenty-odd clubs in the Metropolitan district, showed a reduction of approximately 50 per cent for seven months of 1932 over that of 1930. Analysis of the figures shows that wages and salaries constituted but 52 per cent of the total golf course expenditures, whereas for the previous year comparative figures gave an average of over 70 per cent.

We give these figures as indicating a healthy condition in face of reduced expenses, as they show that machinery and fertilization are not being neglected. The worst thing that can happen to a golf course at any time is to be over-manned, and under-fed. A small but experienced crew, even at a slightly higher wage, is preferable to a large, low-priced, inexperienced gang whose every move and action demands constant and direct supervision.

It will be a wise club and a wise green-chairman that decides to forego for the time being plans that will cause the player unnecessary expenses. At the same time every effort and sacrifice should be made to make sure that the golf course is kept in the best possible shape with a proper attention to fundamental green-keeping principles, so that its future well-being be not impaired.

Budgets Still Restricted

It would seem therefore that the problem again confronting the greenkeeper will be that of providing for the player the best playing conditions possible under a restricted budget. In doing this, the surprising thing is the amount of strictly upkeep work that can be accomplished at a cost undreamed of during those "hectic days" when the playing condition of a golf

course was judged by the amount of money spent, as shown by the club's annual statement.

By strictly upkeep work we mean the faithful carrying out by the greenkeeper and his men of that maintenance work which governs the ordinary playing conditions of a golf course such as the player expects to find when he starts out to play a round of golf. The complaints and grumbings of the average golfer—when registered—are of the simple kind, and concern matters which the greenkeeper has overlooked or forgotten, rather than dealing with some of those intricate problems, the solution of which, seems for the moment, to lie beyond our ken. Our concern then, is to try and eliminate the little inconsequential things that so often upset the nerves, and spoil the day of men who have come to the golf course for exercise and relaxation.

As a ready example, I would say that a prompt and impartial allotment of caddies and their punctual appearance with the club at the first tee will go a long way towards getting your players off to a good start. Contrari-wise, any sign of favoritism, whether it points in the direction of the player or the caddie yard will destroy the morale and discipline of the boys, and be the cause of endless discontent, grumbling, and delay among the members of your club.

Proper Placing of Tee Markers

The first contact that the player has with the golf course, and on each hole is on the teeing ground. The front of each teeing ground—the rule reads—shall be indicated by two markers, and the teeing ground shall include a rectangular space of the depth of two club lengths directly behind the line indicated by the two marks. Under this definition you will note that the teeing grounds extend backward for two club lengths, so that in placing your markers there should always be a space of not less than approximately seven and a half feet between the front line of

the tee markers and the back of the teeing ground.

I draw your attention to this careful placing of the markers because they so often face in the wrong direction, and in important tournaments, are sometimes set so far back that it is difficult for the competitors to swing their clubs, because of rough ground, a rising bank or an overhanging branch from a nearby tree.

Markers should be changed daily, alternating from front to back, on the odd, and from back to front on the even numbered holes. The following week you should change over and reverse the process, thereby maintaining an average playing distance for the eighteen holes at all times. This will insure a fair handicapping of your players, as most of the low scores on which the handicap is based are usually made when all the markers are on the extreme front tees.

I would recommend to the powers that be that the two club-length distance ahead of the back of the teeing ground should constitute the official yardage of a golf hole, and on this—allowing however for the estimated playing distance on some holes—the true par of a course, should be determined.

Before leaving the tee, we will say that the average golfer as well as the good player prefers his teeing surface firm, rather than soft. Above all mow them more than once a week for no golfer cares to tee his ball from a surface that resembles a hay field.

Hints on Boundary Lines

From the tee, the concern of the player is to drive his ball far and straight down the fairway, but somewhere it has been said that "The best laid schemes of mice and men gang aft a-glee" and so with golf balls. That which was intended for far and sure, goes off to right or left, and more often than not—out beyond the boundary line.

Greenkeepers cannot be too careful in placing out-of-bounds stakes. When doing so they should pay particular attention to the inward curves of the club property, or out-of-bounds line. On such curves, the stakes should be placed so that none of the out-of-bounds territory extends inwardly, between any two stakes. Lack of detail, especially where the boundary follows sinuous lines, is often the cause of much argument as well as untoward criticism on the part of visitors whose only guidance is the boundary stake.

Moving on from tee to rough, we find that long and unkempt grass has become a thing of the past—with the exception, I might say, of golf courses where major championships are scheduled to be played—but outside of this purposeful long growth there has been a desirable tendency to avoid leaving the rough at such a length or thickness where the player would easily lose his ball. Now that we have become accustomed to this improved condition the greenkeeper will be well advised—in spite of a reduced budget to keep the rough bordering the fairway, and in front of the tee, at a length which will not try the temper, or prolong the game.

Trap Care Partly Up to Members

The easy living conditions that prevailed in this country from the close of the war up to and beyond the break of 1929 were reflected in the demand made by golfers generally that bunkers be kept free from footprints and niblick gouges. The more painstaking the greenkeeper became in trying to provide this always smooth condition the less careful and the more indifferent the players were in smoothing out the marks they made when playing strokes. Some clubs placed rakes at certain traps, and others provided the caddie with a small rake to try and offset the carelessness and thoughtlessness of the players. The burden however, of making possible the ideal bunker conditions is placed on the back of the greenkeeper and it is only fair to him that the green-chairman should suggest to the membership of his club a more diligent application of the "Golden Rule" in smoothing out, as best they can, the scars made on fairway and in traps. It will not only help avoid "high blood pressure" conditions, but will also go a long way keeping upkeep expenses within budget requirements.

Greens Must Be Kept Up

Putting green upkeep presents a field where angels fear to tread when a reduction of expense is a dire necessity. We believe that curtailment of certain upkeep operations will not seriously affect the health or quality of the turf or the playing condition of its surface; on the contrary, a reduction of mowing hours per week—where greens have been cut daily—will tend to encourage root growth and help make the grasses more resistant to disease.

When golfers start out to play they will

expect a putting surface of even regularity—be they fast or slow—and it will be advisable for the greenkeeper who is short-handed, to bend every energy toward finishing his mowing operations as early in the day as possible, and only under extreme circumstances, should they be carried over into the afternoon.

Watering is an upkeep operation, which is an important factor in determining the playing quality of the turf. Sometimes watering is neglected, more often it is overdone. Neglected greens are usually the far ones on the course, soggy ones are found nearby. Here again the player seeks a sameness of playing conditions, and also demands that your sprinkling operations be carried out with the least possible interference to his game, by reason of unnecessary puddles, or obstructing hose.

Topdressing is another important job which tends to annoy players. The laudable desire of the greenkeeper to finish as many greens as he possibly can sometimes leads him to move from one green to another before rubbing in his material. Putting under such conditions is largely a matter of luck and spoils the touch of the player on the remaining untreated greens.

To sum up, each season demands of the greenkeeper more vigilance, more planning, and more hard work. His plans, however, must be of an elastic nature, in that they must in no way interfere with the pleasure and recreation of the player, nor in the least way disturb his concentration, especially in competition.

In this respect I will make a special plea for the ladies. Their mid-week and very often early forenoon activities on the links are the cause of delaying the workmen in their maintenance work. Here a more intimate touch with the tournament schedule of the club, will save the greenkeeper much unnecessary worry.

The players on their part, while they will expect much and demand more must consider the times through which (I trust) we are passing and like the good sportmen—which all golfers believe they are—be content to play the course as they find it and the ball as it lies.

On the greenkeeper—in no small measure—rests the responsibility of helping clubs pull through. His intelligence, skill, economy, and hard work are vital to the full recovery of golf clubs.

Green Fee-Travel Ticket Builds Fee Course Play

GOLFERS IN LARGE metropolitan areas, who do not have or desire to use automobiles in journeying from their homes to a course, seldom have privileges which are offered to the clientele of the Main Line Open golf course of Wayne, Pa., located in the picturesque suburban section of Philadelphia. These privileges make it possible for the Philadelphia golfer of average means to be transported to the very tee of the golf links without any cost other than that of the green-fee, as that amount includes round trip transportation to the course.

The management of the Main Line Open golf club, believing that its business would be increased if it could provide economical transportation for many of the residents of Philadelphia, affected an arrangement with the Philadelphia & Western Railway Co., whereby the golfer buys a combination ticket at the 69th Street, Philadelphia, ticket office of the railway company, which ticket provides round trip transportation to the Radnor Station of the Philadelphia & Western and a green-fee ticket for the Main Line Open Golf Course. The golfer pays no greater amount for this combination ticket than he would otherwise pay for his green-fee ticket at the golf course.

The transportation company is able to provide a special rate for this character of transportation, inasmuch as otherwise these golfing patrons would not be secured; while the management of the golf course gains, since these individuals would not be inclined to pay frequently the regular transportation fare necessary to travel from their homes to the golf course, for when this amount is added to the green-fee, it would create quite an expense.

It is a unique merchandising feature and has been beneficial to both the transportation and the golf course management.

Buddy Poppy Sale During Week of Memorial Day

BUDDY POPPIES, made by disabled and needy ex-service men, again will be on sale during the week in which Memorial Day falls. Entire proceeds of the sale are devoted to relief and welfare work among veterans and their families.