

PLAN COURSE POLICY WELL IN ADVANCE - IT PAYS!

By WILLIAM PRINCE SMITH

Green-Chairman, CC of Pittsfield, Mass.

THE first requisite of a successful long term policy, it seems to me, is proper selection of the green-committee. This should be composed of a small number of responsible men keenly interested in their club and its course; men of various ages so that the younger ones may be learning from experience and be ready to step in at a later date, as chairmen, to carry on the policy, if it has proved successful. Because, without a doubt, the chairman of the group must be the key man and upon him must depend, to a large extent, the carrying out of the plan.

Next, you might have one whom I will call an advisor; for I do not believe it to be possible that anyone on your committee will have the necessary education and time for this position. If your greenkeeper has all of these technical qualities, he will probably cost a small club more salary than it can afford to pay. A greenkeeper, such as our club has, with the necessary technical knowledge of soils, fertilizers, drainage, etc., to follow the advisor's long term policy, plus an excellent technique in his methods, and a further ability to handle men, will not add such a large annual cost to your expense budget.

We find an advisor profitable. Ours is Lawrence F. Dickinson, of Massachusetts State College, to whom I give unqualified

This address was briskly debated at the Massachusetts State College conference because of its suggestion of an advisor to the green-committee of the smaller club.

For the idea, greenkeepers said that a sound, skilled authority who would work with the greenkeeper and "front" for him would work out fine—whenever it was possible to get this rare person.

The difficulty of getting a properly qualified advisor and the expense which might be questionable in view of the club's greenkeeper's present salary and the general scantiness of the maintenance budget were arguments against the idea. Smith finds a long term program of budget planning and course maintenance is proving a success at his club.

credit for greatly improved playing conditions at our club.

The greenkeeper must, of necessity, be in full sympathy with the ways and ideas of the advisor. This is absolutely necessary, because men of all kinds are constantly bringing pressure to bear on the greenkeeper to get him to try this and that, and if deviations are made from your adopted plan, certainly it is most unfair to your advisor.

Plan What You Want to Accomplish

If you have organized as above, the next step, it seems to me, is to draw up a plan, showing what you desire to accomplish. At our club naturally greens come first, and I believe every club aspires to have perfect putting surfaces. When drawing up your greens policy you must start at the bottom—construction.

Have your subsoil and surface drainage been properly constructed and your seepage taken care of? If not, should they be repaired or should the green be rebuilt? Which work will be cheaper in the long run and which will give you the better conditions more quickly, and hence inconvenience your playing members the least? Is the grass on your greens suitable for your locality? Also what kind of a putting surface is desired, taking the texture into consideration? For example, stolons or seeded greens. Draw up your plan so as to get your greens into the desired condition as speedily and economically as possible and then follow closely the advisor's instructions for their maintenance.

Tee Revision Is Common Major Problem

Tees come next and here the initial construction is fully as important as in the green. Too many courses find that their tees have been poorly located and poorly

constructed. The average golfer likes to play from large and well turfed tees and if these conditions are not fulfilled, your long term policy should contain the corrected ideas to be carried out after your greens are put in shape. Also try and have all your tees low enough and in a location so that they can be moved by the fairway tractor. This will save a great deal of money in labor, as it costs money to send men out to mow 18 tees by hand. You will find, also, that no matter how careful you are, some tees will have to be completely returfed from time to time, or constantly have the scars plugged. To this end, a tee nursery is almost as necessary as a green nursery, to insure the proper kind of good grass for this purpose, since the use of portions of ordinary fairway turf will usually result in doing the job over again. Here, too, large tees, especially on the par-three holes, and constant shifting of the markers, will cut the above plugging and returfing to a minimum.

Perhaps the long term fairway policy can be carried out in conjunction with the tees. This is undoubtedly true as regards general upkeep, but reconstruction and drainage should await the completion of your tee program. However, the fertilization of your fairways must be planned regardless of anything else. There is little doubt but that in the majority of golf clubs the fairways have seldom been fertilized. It is so easy to neglect them until they are practically filled with dandelions, crab grass and weeds. It is comparatively easy in a long term program to feed three to six fairways a year until all are done. It is nice to do all of the surface from tee to green, but not absolutely necessary.

Machinery Saves In Rough Maintenance

The fourth item in our long term policy combine the rough, traps and surroundings in general. There isn't much that can be done or planned as regards rough. There it is and it must be cut at least once, and in the heaviest areas, twice a year. Try to eliminate dead and deformed trees, boulders and such so that the rough may be cut by machinery. If not by horses or tractor, purchase some good machine to be run by motor and guided by hand. It will soon pay for itself. There is nothing more irritating to golfers than long, heavy rough. It costs them money

in lost balls and holds up the course while they are searching for them. The planning here is to know the time of year most suitable for cutting and have your decks cleared for this action. That is, don't let it conflict with topdressing and other necessary work, and when you go at it, finish the job as speedily as possible.

Plan Financing On Long Term Platform

Since the hard part of carrying out any long term policy such as I have outlined is the usual lack of money, it becomes absolutely necessary that the grounds budget shall be very carefully planned and lived up to. Obviously, money should be made to go just as far as possible, for usually this is the only way your long term policy can be carried out. Since the biggest part of most course maintenance budgets is labor, machinery should be purchased and used where it can be shown the job can be done more economically and as well. However, don't use a machine if it is harmful in any way in the long run; because dollars saved now will have to be spent repairing the damage later.

Having outlined briefly the high spots in a long term policy, may I now point out what I believe to be the definite values. The primary object of a golf club is to play golf. Especially in the north where winter comes all too soon and lingers all too long, the days of playing are all too limited. Therefore, with the days and hours for topdressing greens definitely planned; with weeding and plugging worked out so that it is accomplished as speedily as possible; with as much new construction and repair work as possible completed in the off season, your green-committee has interfered with golf play only a minimum.

With a long term policy your eyes are fixed on a goal and you continue to carry the ball toward that goal instead of spending all your money in one year in building one green or one tee to please the most boistrous, or to please, perhaps, the green-committee itself.

It gives the committee and the green-keeper courage to stand back of their ideas as proven by the comparison of the records; courage to stand out against the board of directors when they want to take money from your budget for ideas foreign to golf. But above all it has proven, in our own case, that we can have a better course, at much lower expense and with more days of golf than ever before.