

WHY NOT ANNUAL GREENS AWARDS?

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MANY hours of earnest discussion have been spent by greenkeepers in efforts to discover some way in which their labors for golf would be recognized as notable achievements, deserving of lively commendation and financial returns more nearly in line with the responsibility the greenkeeper must assume at his course. Frequently heard is the complaint that the greenkeeper spends freely from his own rather small income in acquiring a technical education in turf culture and maintenance methods, applies his knowledge effectively in economical and first class conditioning of his course, but remains unknown to the majority of his club's members. In these discussions among greenkeepers you often hear reference to the far-reaching reputations of professionals and how such fame has an actual cash value to the professionals.

When one analyzes the statements comparing the fame of the pros and the almost anonymous status of greenkeepers, there is one factor usually overlooked. Not all pros are famous. Greenkeepers are apt to forget that there are many hundreds of non-tournament pros who are handling their jobs well, but who are practically unknown away from their own clubs. From time to time you may hear these men complain about the jobs, the money and the glory going to the tournament pro while the pro who stays at home teaching and handling other club duties diligently often fails to receive his due share of esteem and income.

Value in Competition

Considering these phases of the golf business we come to the inevitable conclusion that competition not only is the life of trade, but the life of progress in every department of club operations.

The famous pro stars who have won major championships get their names headlined in the newspapers and in locker-room conversation because they won in competition. The National Open champion isn't necessarily the country's best golfer, but he happened to be fa-

vored by fortune and by having his game better than those of the rest of the field just at the right time, even though the right time might last only four rounds.

However, the winner of the National Open was compared with other foremost golfers of the country for those four rounds and he came out first. That makes him famous. Other fellows may beat him by many strokes in another tournament a few weeks after the National Open; still the Open winner retains his reputation and his name in the record books.

We can apply the competitive line of reasoning to greenkeeping and I believe that we may find a valuable lead toward solution of the greenkeepers' problem of making themselves prominently and favorably known to the public.

Many Awards Are Possible

There are many of greenkeeping's myriad aspects that could be put on a competitive basis so that outstanding achievements of greenkeepers could be determined by expert juries of other greenkeepers, and awards of medals, plaques or even dignified printed awards could be made for display at the winners' clubs.

News of such awards would make newspaper publicity and although the publicity would not be of spectacular character like that of sporting events, it would be sound and valuable publicity along the lines of the various awards given annually to scientists.

This would be the sort of publicity on which our reputations as masters of greenkeeping would have to be based and which would establish plainly our qualifications for reasonable earnings from our profession.

It is perfectly true that greenkeepers at some older, properly constructed, adequately financed courses would have the

advantage in winning some of the rewards, but there should be wide enough scope of awards to give each able and ingenious man an opportunity to receive from his fellows recognition of his superior performance. If we do not, or can not, grant to those among us in greenkeeping a generous and well merited evidence of signally successful work that has been done, then we have no license to complain about our failure to receive warmer recognition from the golfers and our clubs.

Idea Is Practical

I have no doubt that this suggestion of competitive judgments of greenkeeping work and results, or of ideas contributed to the general or specific advance of golf course maintenance, will be pronounced by some of my comrades in the profession as an impractical and dangerous idea. They will cite the practical impossibility of making course maintenance cost comparisons as evidence of the impossibility of comparing any phase of golf course work. To that criticism I can only plead for a breadth of vision and a determined scientific ambition to arrive at fair methods of comparisons, when comparisons must be made. And certainly in any competitive affair, comparisons are inevitable. However, awards might be made annually for such performances as the most practical and valuable contribution to maintenance machinery upkeep, which would not necessarily involve comparison of the working conditions or machinery at different courses.

Judges each year would be disqualified from entering the competition. The selection of judges annually would be an important part of the competition, for men of unquestioned ability, free from bias and willingness to make the sacrifice of time required for their task, would have to be chosen. Any man named as a judge would be receiving from his associates the most sincere endorsement of his standing as a greenkeeper.

Such competitive affairs as I suggest could be conducted sectionally, with the results directing club officials' and members' attention to the character of the greenkeepers' work. By giving clubs something to brag about when an award was made, the clubs would inevitably boast of the achievements of their greenkeepers.

It is to be expected that there would be jealousies, disappointments and criticisms in greenkeeping competitions, just as there are in golf tournaments. But it must be admitted that the rest of the field doesn't suffer any reduction in income because one man wins, and that man's increased earning power tends to improve the chances for other contenders.

With the many sectional meetings that are held each year it should not be difficult for some experimental work to be done along this competitive award line. The various sectional greenkeeper association officials could exchange information on the competitions with an idea to the eventual standardization of greenkeeping competitions on a sectional judging basis.

One must admit that the great increase in the number of sectional Open golf tournaments made by the Professional Golfers' Association's former tournament bureau manager, Bob Harlow, had a definite result in increasing pro salaries. Men had more opportunities for publicity and establishment of reputations based on competitive performances.

We must remember that competition made professional golf. The earlier professionals in this country were engaged for their greenkeeping work. When the competition in playing gave professionals chances for getting into the public eye, the professionals profited greatly by this development. Those players left the greenkeeping part of their work for the more prominent and more profitable work of playing in competitions. We have seen, too, that renown won in competitive golf did much to break down the caste system that formerly had the British pros in a sorry social-economic state.

Study and constructive discussion devoted to formulating standards of competition allowing us to demonstrate our comparative ratings in various phases of greenkeeping will do a whole lot more good for us than our present rather aimless laments about the discouraging conditions in the greenkeeping profession.

No Definite Rule—GOLFDOM receives numerous requests for information regarding conditions under which the stroke of "stroke and distance" penalty is remitted for out of bounds in a national championship. There is no definite rule about the number of "out of bounds" holes a course must have to waive the stroke penalty. The USGA makes the ruling covering special cases, which are rare.