

WHAT'S AHEAD FOR

GREENKEEPERS?

By WALTER E. LANGTON

Greenkeeper, San Gabriel (Calif.) CC

Technical progress in greenkeeping during the past 10 years has been little short of astounding. Higher maintenance standards have been generally achieved despite the handicap of almost every financial, turf cultural, and social development.

But, notwithstanding the advance in the profession's methods and results, the greenkeeper himself has not advanced materially or in recognition of golfers and club officials.

The situation is unfair, and holds grave consequences for the future of golf.

Walter E. Langton, greenkeeper of the San Gabriel CC, and dean of Southern California greenkeepers, considers the greenkeepers' status in a calm, philosophical manner that will interest greenkeepers and club officials, alike.
—The Editor.

FOR a greenkeeper to write about the future of greenkeeping as a profession would require a combination of qualities that few of the calling possess. To be in any degree accurate he would have to be prophetic, imaginary, philosophical, scientific—in fact, he would be an extremely gifted individual imbued with a profound knowledge of the future of economics and social trends, and there just ain't no such animal. Or if there were, he most certainly would not be a greenkeeper.

The best this greenkeeper can do is a lot of wishful thinking and guessing. Greenkeepers like most other folks are not entirely captains of their souls and are merely creatures of circumstance. Like birds in a cage they can only move within the limits of their environment.

For more than 150 years a keeper of the greens has been regarded as little more than a glorified laborer, dignified by the name of Greenkeeper, or sometimes superintendent, and held responsible for

everything that happens on his course 24 hours of the day. If he has good bosses he is lucky; if not, he is unfortunate because he has an added handicap. A greenkeeper has enough to fight without contending with bosses who, because they may have made a success in men's furnishings, consider themselves the supreme authority on the upkeep of turf.

Because the greenkeeper perforce must create unnatural conditions, Mother Nature is arrayed against him. The weather usually is too hot or too cold, or too wet or too dry; unnecessary plants infest his turf; and every miserable bug or fungus that loves the juice of grasses preys on them in the dark. In order to compete

At the Fargo (N. D.) CC, golfer Carl Lunde found his ball lying high in the thick rough of the 12th hole. He swung at it lustily with an 8-iron and not one, but two balls landed on the green. The other had been hidden in the grass below his.

with these natural enemies, a greenkeeper must be ever on the alert. A little slackness here and there and the bugs have got him. He must possess a working knowledge of so many things: mechanics, drainage, chemistry, entomology, tree surgery, landscape architecture, construction, and botany; and yet even with this rather extensive knowledge he for the most part is the possessor of an inferiority complex. A century and a half of the golfing fraternity's idea of a greenkeeper's job has fixed the type and has placed shackles upon a calling which will be hard to break.

Rates Low Spot on Roster

Study the employees' roster of any club carefully for the rating of the greenkeeper. He is usually placed very close to the bottom of the list, sometimes a little higher than the caddie master; and yet good greens, tees, and fairways are what make a golf club. Throw a couple of greens out of commission and see how quickly golf players will desert the course and go to a layout where all the units are in good shape. Golf players will not tolerate bad playing conditions if good ones are available elsewhere. They will put up with a professional who is often off the job or with a poor meal or with most other inconveniences without resigning (there is a successful golf course in the West which has neither pro nor clubhouse), but they will not put up with an inefficient greenkeeper. Of course professionals and house managers have their place in the scheme of things. We as greenkeepers are not envious of any breaks they may get. They have their troubles and annoyances, and if we knew of the every-day problems which beset the pro and the manager we would have more consideration for them. But this is written from the standpoint of the greenkeeper and while it is not our intention to lower anyone's status, we would like to raise our own.

How can this be done? What is the future of greenkeepers? These are vital questions to every greenkeeper old and young. The first thing to do is to evaluate ourselves and ask ourselves why we are

so lacking in recognition. Do we lack a fundamental knowledge of our work? Do we lack organization? Are we making the most of our opportunities? Do we lack publicity? Or do we just feel inferior?

Before we can make any conclusions as to the future of greenkeeping, a comprehensive study of the above questions must be made.

Study will show that the status of any group is judged by the status of the individual members. Hence it pays the average man to foster the friendship and acquaintance of those men who are above average in their professional ability. On the other hand, a display of ineffectiveness on the part of one greenkeeper lowers the status of all. Therefore, it is absolutely imperative that the greatest care be shown by membership committees in recommending any man who calls himself a greenkeeper to be added to the roster of a greenkeeper's organization. I am inclined to believe that before anyone is admitted he should be given some sort of an examination, one which will determine whether or not the applicant is capable of handling the various every-day problems which will confront him on a golf course. Further, I believe that the applicant's character should be scrutinized carefully before he is given final approval. Organizations do not last long when composed of men of dubious character, so why be dragged down when it is easy to say no? When golf clubs can depend entirely upon the recommendations of a greenkeeper's organization for material to fill a vacant position, then that organization definitely will have arrived.

Job Affected by Membership Level

Greenkeepers, like any other men, are subject to the law of supply and demand and other economic vagaries. If there is an over-supply and the demand is limited, salaries inevitably will be lowered. Perhaps private clubs are more affected by the fluctuations of trade than most other organizations. A drop in the market, an increase in taxes, a decline in business, or a suggested assessment will see many with limited means dropping their memberships. We cannot blame people for doing this, for golf is not an absolute necessity and can be dispensed with in time of trouble. The membership mortality in private clubs during the last depression must have been enormous, and the consequent loss of greenkeepers' positions

during that perilous period will never be accurately known.

One other point which never has been given the publicity it deserves is the large amount of sickness and even deaths among those greenkeepers who were trying to carry on with budgets cut in two, limited man power, deteriorated machinery, and the attempt to make a dollar go further than two previous dollars. Men simply worked their fingers to the bone in trying to save clubs, and, incidentally, their own positions. Some fell by the wayside and most of those who weathered the storm show the scars of battle in some form or other. All of which brings us inevitably to one conclusion: the future of greenkeeping is inextricably tied up with our economic system, and the prosperity of greenkeepers is dependent entirely upon the well-being and income of the golfing public. And to hazard even a thought as to what our future economic situation will be savors too much of guess work.

United Effort is Difficult

We know the serious financial situation many find themselves in. We know the apparent hopelessness of thousands of our young folks. Whatever our political opinions may be and whatever party is in power, each party will try, to the best of its knowledge, to solve the riddle of our economic ills, and whether we are politically-minded or not, the fact remains that as good citizens we must take a part and fulfill our obligations to society. We may be a very small part, but a part nevertheless, and it is up to us to assist in molding our own destiny. This calls for unity of thought and unity of action, and herein lies the most difficult part of the whole matter, for any kind of unity on close consideration appears to be inapplicable. Greenkeeping is an individual process; each course is a separate entity possessing problems and requiring treatments all its own. If it were possible to standardize

Minor golf war flaring in Idaho. L. L. Whalen, mgr., Lewiston CC, complained recently to C. R. Critchell, secy.-treas. of Idaho State GA, that north Idaho had not been given a break on the state amateur meet, scheduled July 1-4, and as a result north Idaho golfers would boycott the event, which has been held in Boise for 5 consecutive years. Critchell's rebuttal was that no north Idaho club since 1932 had invited the state association to hold the Amateur in that section.



A Dutch correspondent sends this picture of a statue in Amsterdam, offering it as proof that golf was played in Holland before it hit Scotland. The trick-shot artist is whacking away at a ball resting on a dragon's head. Under the old rules you had your choice of hitting or trying to lift and risking your arm.

clubs and courses in all particulars, the problem would be easy. One has only to go to a greenkeepers' meeting and listen to a discussion to note the diversified methods in attacking each problem. The same could be said of a board of directors' meeting, but on general principles some kind of collective action is possible.

How far we can go or would be allowed to go is problematical, for we are weak collectively and weaker individually. We are the flotsam and jetsam of the golfing fraternity tossed hither and yon according to the whims and fancies of those who engage us. If we please, we prosper. If not, no collective action can help us, and this plain truth forever is staring us in the face. Maybe this condition has its compensations because it has made each individual rely entirely upon his own strength and wisdom.

It has been suggested that we advertise ourselves, that we take a leaf out of the book of those who ballyhoo themselves into prosperity, that by the force of advertising appeal we overwhelm all derogatory influences that have been opposed to us in the past. Maybe this would help, pro-

For speedy organization of a golf club, Independence, Mo., shows the way. One morning recently, Bill Gillmor of that city decided to start a golf club; four days later he had sold memberships to 173 fellow townsmen, all of whom laid cash on the line. With dues set at \$48 a year, the new club already has sufficient income to operate in the black, according to Gillmor, who is now looking for a suitable site for the course.

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vided we had the right press agent, one with vision, ability, and recognized standing in his profession. But the general run of greenkeepers do not like living in fish bowls. There is nothing spectacular in their work. They are too close to nature and too far away from the artificialities of modern life to get any great amount of satisfaction out of mere publicity. Maybe the greenkeeper should make more outside contacts, should take a more active interest in the community life around him, and thus be ever on the alert to stabilize his position and establish a reputation for ability and integrity.

But when all is said and done, our strongest hope lies in the fact that we have a responsible position, a place of trust where we have to solve fresh problems each day. Are we by our individual efforts equal to the occasion? If not, there is no hope. The future of greenkeeping is one of those unsolved riddles, creating much discussion but no solution. This we do know, the game is more important than anything else. We don't go to the races to see the man who built the track nor the man who maintains it, nor do we go to see the man who runs the hot dog stands. We go to see the horses run, and when they are finished, we cheer the animal upon which is placed the wreath of flowers.

Davies Makes Trans-Miss Click Over Air Waves

ONE of the best covered district tournaments, from a radio listeners earpoint, was the recent Transmississippi at Lincoln, Nebr. Stanley Davies, Omaha Field club pro, and Harry Burke, WOW station program director, caught the show at Lincoln and piped it to Omaha where it was broadcast by WOW. They interviewed officials and prominent players in a neighborly way that put in a great plug for golf promotion throughout the Transmiss sector.

Davies has been putting on a weekly

golf broadcast for several years, during the season, over WOW. He makes great choice of material and has a pleasing, well-paced delivery. Eight times out of 10 Stan puts on the best golf broadcast anybody's doing in this country. Anyway, that's what we think.

A Little Look Ahead

BY RUBEN NORTEN

Pro-manager, Rob Roy CC

The manager, the greenkeeper, and each and every pro

Gets up these times at break of day and works till the moon sinks low

He hustles and he worries and, exhausted, goes to sleep

And troubled dreams of jobs undone into his slumbers creep.

Although his pay would be the same if days were twice as long

To make his day but 18 hours, appears to him as wrong.

For he has the sad reflection when his lengthy day is through,

That all too soon will winter come when there isn't work to do.

Now, is the guy a Hercules, by leisure thoughts dismayed?

Nix, my friend, but in dreary winter maybe he won't get paid.

So in these gladsome summer months he works till out of breath

And if he's lucky in the winter, he'll un-noticed, starve to death.

Prepare for Women's National—Course and clubhouse of the Westmoreland CC (Chicago district) are being carefully groomed by pro-greenkeeper Al Lesperance and manager Tom Ream for the 42nd Women's National championship, scheduled for their club Sept. 19-24.

Every preparation is being made by Ream, Lesperance and the club's officials to handle the largest galleries in the history of the event.

"Our expectation of breaking the attendance record for this championship," says Ream, "is based not only on the growing popularity of the Women's National as a sporting event, but also on the planned participation of five members of the British Curtis cup team, including Pamela Barton, who took the Women's title back to England with her the last time she was over here in 1936. This gives the event an international aspect that is bound to boost interest and attendance, and the club is preparing accordingly."

Estelle Lawson Page is the present title holder.