

# "If I Were Green-Chairman"

**A**FTER seeing and hearing for years that not infrequently the green-chairman is one of the most puzzling problems with which the greenkeeper contends, GOLFDOM asked for statements from successful greenkeepers who laud their chairmen in private sessions where everyone can speak freely.

Obviously, these men who cite their own chairmen as paragons, are men with chairmen who handle the job as a practical greenkeeper believes it should be handled. The experienced greenkeeper realizes fully that the chairman's job is no bed of thornless roses, either, and considers that an important part of the greenkeeper's work is that of conducting operations so the chairman's visits to his own club will not be made with the threat of kicks and other woes uppermost.

From observation of exemplary performance, Robert S. Greenfield, widely-known greenkeeper of the Wilshire CC (Los Angeles district) advises chairmen what he'd do if he were in their job.

Says Greenfield:

For the average greenkeeper to imagine himself in the position of green-chairman, is an invitation for comment with great possibilities of humor; but as far as I am concerned it will be strictly serious and I hope, constructive.

## Three Year Job, At Least

In taking over the running of a golf course my first condition would be that the job was mine for at least three years. After that was settled I would assure myself that I had a qualified greenkeeper to depend on.

I should admit at the outset that it might be difficult for a new green-chairman with no background of experience to know if he had a capable greenkeeper or not. The blame for such a difficulty can be laid at the doorstep of the local golf association I think, as there should have been a system set up long ago between the local greenkeepers' association and the local golf association as to the abilities of the individual greenkeepers in their district.

I would like to belong to a group of green-chairmen who would visit and play the different courses, and I would try to arrange field meetings with the green-

keepers and discuss greenkeeping problems.

I would feel it no more than my duty to be out for a few mornings seeing the work being done. This would be an education to many critical golfers.

Mention of the word criticism brings up the bane of the green-chairman's existence, if he takes his job seriously. If he is a weak specimen, the greenkeeper and his crew have double trouble.

## Know What's Going On

If it were my job to meet the critics, I would make it a point never to be put on the defensive. I would know what the conditions are on the course, and what the greenkeeper and his men are doing and why.

If I am satisfied that the best is being done, then it is up to me to make the members understand they are getting their money's worth.

I would make it a point to have the greenkeeper attend committee meetings where course business was to be discussed and encourage him to offer suggestions for improvements. Also, I would have him keep some simple form of cost accounting.

I would take it for granted that the greenkeeper was boss of the course and never interfere with his men under any circumstance. By the same token I'd expect the greenkeeper to be able to give me reasonable information of the why and wherefore of what was done; the causes and cures for the troubles that arise.

I would do my best to fill my job as a fair-minded man, a job that might, at the start, have more kicks than plaudits, but a job if well done, that would merit respect and gratitude of the much-troubled greenkeeper as well as that of the members.

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*Charles Baskin, Supt., Country Club of Waterbury, Conn., says:*

**E**FFICIENT and pleasant relations between the greenkeeper and chairman depend a lot upon the greenkeeper considering what he would do were he the chairman, and what he'd want done by the greenkeeper if the positions were exchanged.

Fortunately, at my club, our chairman is one who would be regarded as the ideal

one by most clubs. Consequently work on the course is directed with a unity of understanding that saves the club considerable money and permits us to get work done quickly as dictated by weather conditions. I know what I would expect of myself were I in his shoes as chairman and he knows that I apply, in course maintenance work, the policies the directors lay down and that the members desire to produce attractive playing conditions.

The chairman-greenkeeper relations at our club are as I would have them if I were chairman, so an outline of our practice may be of help to others.

The chairman is of utmost assistance to the greenkeeper but does not carry his operations into such detail and such participation in the mechanics of the operation that the greenkeeper's job becomes that of attending to the chairman first, and the course second. That too-common mistake we have completely escaped.

Before the season starts we discuss the problems of the coming year and plan to see how we can get the most work done with our budget. In this planning we itemize the budget by classification of work and, so far as possible, by the time when the work should be done. The chairman tells the improvements he would like to see made during the year. He asks me for my suggestions. He tells his ideas, and by the time we complete threshing out the subject of improvements and how to accomplish them, we have the work clearly in mind instead of being handicapped by general ideas that are subject to the temptation and expense of frequent change as the work is undertaken.

#### Chairman Watches Budget Closely

The chairman checks to see that the budget is being adhered to in the closest practical manner. He is aware that no hard and fast rule may be applied to the monthly maintenance of the budget. One month may be a bit off and adjustment will have to be made the next month. The chairman is not backward about giving words of encouragement and commendation. Such a policy is an incentive to the greenkeeper.

With the exception of only a few emergency cases our business together is

handled at the club. Many times chairmen go to greenkeepers' homes for their conferences. Records are not available and the location, generally, isn't best for a business session.

Another thing that my chairman does which enables me to devote my time and interest properly to affairs that count for the club, is not passing along complaints from members, which in his judgment, are not justified. This is one of the surest signs of chairman's qualifications. All of us know members who complain, conscientiously but ignorantly, about matters that if handled according to the complainant's wishes, would cause dissatisfaction among almost all other members of the club. The chairman who protects his greenkeeper against these ill-advised complaints is valuable to the club, and its greenkeeper.

The average golf club member has no idea how much trouble baseless complaints cause, or how much money is wasted to do work demanded by one, or a very few, of a club's entire membership. The greenkeeper is put on the spot if the chairman does not insist that all complaints from members come to him first, and are sifted with consideration. The complaining member who goes to the greenkeeper and doesn't get immediate action because the greenkeeper has neither authority nor conviction to act, may regard himself as personally offended by the greenkeeper. Such situations are unfair and unhealthy to the greenkeeper. We do not have them at our club. Our chairman acts as the competent greenkeeper would act were he chairman.

#### Greenkeeper Gets Justifiable Complaints

The foregoing of course does not mean that the chairman doesn't pass justified complaints along to me. He does that quickly, and that is one of the reasons the job can be handled satisfactorily. With growth conditions for trouble always being favorable on a golf course, regardless of the preventive means taken, the greenkeeper needs full and sympathetic cooperation in discovering trouble in its earliest stages, and in locating any detail that is not being cared for in a way that adds to members' pleasure and pride in the course.

Chairman-greenkeeper relations of the type I have outlined not only make work easier for both men, but make more certain the achievement of their mutual aim, supplying the club with a course of which members may boast and course management of a character that compares very favorably with business operations in other fields.

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An annual event at the Edison Club, Schenectady, N. Y., is a clean-up party in which members remove rocks, brush, stumps, etc., and plant small trees under direction of Greenkeeper Mitchell.