

Crashing the Press to sell the Greenkeeper

By Charles A. Burns

For the first time, this year greenkeepers were beneficiaries of a national publicity campaign. Charles A. Burns, Ohio newspaperman who presaged the greenkeepers and the Greenkeeping Superintendents' convention, worked stories about the greenkeepers' responsibilities and achievements into many newspapers.

The value of this publicity enterprise, although of short duration, was inestimable. It brought the course superintendents into sharp focus before golfers, and secured for them widespread recognition of their vital service to the game.

Burns tells a few details of the campaign and points out its big lesson.—Editor.

FOR the last three months I have been busy trying to obtain more and better public acceptance for the "forgotten man" of golf, the greenkeeper who toils from dawn until dark so that golf scores may less resemble our national budget.

Through the kindness of the press and feeble efforts of this correspondent, news stories featuring the talents of greenkeepers have appeared in sport pages of newspapers representing a total circulation of approximately twenty million readers, in 30 odd states and Canada. In addition, a number of business publications have chosen to mention the greenkeeper. Our checkup—which of necessity must be incomplete—also indicates that more than 100 radio stations with a listener audience of several million sports fans have extolled on their sports programs the talents of the tillers of the turf.

Releases Keyed to Outlets

In order to get this acceptance it has been necessary to do a lot of research work, compile factual data, write letters and study the styles of news medias. Contrary to common belief, stories like this do not "just happen" and are not the result of bending an elbow with a news reporter. Placement of this material is the result of scientific study and a very definite strategy is involved, which is as intricate as the important factors in the

successful sowing of good seed. The style of each individual publication and media must be studied and an attempt or, more often, several efforts made to submit information adapted to their editorial requirements. By the same token it is necessary to synchronize your releases to radio announcers. An editor in Red Gap, Texas, may be attracted by the fact that a study of the love life of the Japanese Beetle is necessary to exterminate that turf killer, while one of his contemporaries in New England would remain unmoved by such an undignified approach, but become intensely interested in the scientific background of brown-patch research.

So that we could dramatize this business of greenkeeping, we have uncovered some strange and startling facts about greenkeepers as well as their work. We have taken dull and uninteresting things and tried to inject life into them so the golf playing public will better appreciate the scientific progress and industry of the greenkeeper.

Our analysis leads us to the conclusion that the "forgotten man" owes a great deal of his present status in golf and society to his own forgetfulness. He has failed to boost himself and take credit where and when due. True, scores have been clipped, but so have golf greens . . . so fine and close, due to the greenkeeper, that the human element is now the greatest hazard in dropping a six-footer.

The word "pare" has become almost as important in golf as "par" especially when making course budgets. We believe the last vowel will lose its popularity when and if the greenkeepers start boosting their work and trying to shoot publicity par with themselves.

Carolinas Plan Golf Clinic.— Archie Reid, president, USGA, Donald J. Ross, Horton Smith and Jimmy Thomson will make up the faculty which will preside over the first "Country Club Clinic," of the Carolinas Golf Assn., to be held at the Pinehurst CC March 20.

Attendance at the clinic will be limited to presidents, or the presidents' representatives and professionals, of member clubs in the Carolinas Assn. Subjects to be discussed will be, "Swing Fundamentals," "Shop Management and Accounting," "Building Up Club Membership," and "Course Maintenance." Each subject will be presented briefly and will be followed by discussion.