

Recreation Needs MEN

Today's trends call for future leaders with both practical and academic training

By Dr. Howard B. Sprague*

N. J. Experiment Station, New Brunswick, N. J.

THERE are many who feel that golf and associated sports have hardly begun to assume their proper place in the program of national recreation. Why should it not be possible for 10 or 20 times as many people to play golf as now enjoy the game? Is there any other sport which can be enjoyed by young and old with so much benefit to all? Lack of time in our present day scheme of life is certainly no barrier to this enlarged development of golf. The principal limitations are lack of golf courses, and the expense. I believe that the solution of these temporary obstacles lies almost wholly in the hands of the course superintendent. How well is he equipped to develop these larger opportunities?

In the old days a would-be greenkeeper usually spent a long apprenticeship on some golf course learning the secrets of turf culture by the hard road of trial and error, success and failure, with such aid as he might receive from the foreman or greenkeeper. As greenkeeper he found that not only was he expected to know the fundamentals of turf culture, but that he must also know how to handle men; he must apply some satisfactory method of keeping detailed records on expenditures; he must know what supplies and equipment are actually needed, and where and how to buy them most effectively, and most important of all, he must know how

to deal with the players of all types and moods who patronize the golf course.

You present-day superintendents have gone far in correcting and overcoming the hazards of the profession. During the last 20 years, there has been a rapidly increasing number of greenkeepers who organized associations and societies for the exchange of information. You have requested and supported short courses and schools conducted by the universities and agricultural colleges. You have attended field meetings and demonstrations on experiments with turf grasses and on the latest developments in machinery and equipment. You have established certain ethical standards as to what a superintendent will or will not do, for the protection of your own honor and the integrity of the profession in its service to the public. You require certain minimum standards of training and ability as a prerequisite for membership in your national and local organizations. You make an effort to keep abreast of the latest scientific discoveries and their application to golf course maintenance. In short, you are gradually emerging from the status of a trade into that of a profession. The full fledged development of that profession depends on the provisions you make for the future, and your vision as to what might be done.

Will you seek as your field, the providing of recreation to a limited few on a luxury basis, or will you undertake to

*GSA Convention Paper.



1940 class of the Massachusetts State College winter school for greenkeepers is shown in the photo above. Many of the class, which, incidentally, is larger than last year's group, attended the National Greenkeepers convention in New York City during February. Prof. Lawrence S. Dickinson, MSC Agronomy Dept., is the founder and director of the course. He is shown at extreme right, third row. Second half of the MSC two-term course will be concluded March 15.

Greenkeepers are taking the medicine they prepare for others. John Gray, new proxy of the GSA, when teamed with Bob Reith, pro at the Essex club, won second place in the Michigan and Border Cities GSA greenkeeper-pro championship last fall. Harold Stodola, new v.p., was University of Minnesota golf champion in 1926.

serve the nation as a whole? Will you limit yourselves to a knowledge of turf culture, or will you see that this knowledge is actually the basis for solving the recreational problem of a nation, and that you must be equipped to meet the members of all other professions on an equal footing as to training, education, and an understanding of our national needs?

We have a large recreational problem in all parts of the nation. New parks, playgrounds, athletic fields, and playing fields of all sorts have been built by the thousands in the past 10 years, and there is evidence that this trend will continue. Who will manage these recreational facilities? If I asked who would run the libraries of our country, you would answer—the librarians. I warn you there is no such clear cut answer as to who will manage these new recreation facilities. Nor will there be a clear answer until your profession has seen and accepted the opportunities and responsibilities. If you don't accept, some other group will ultimately take over this field of activity.

Pick Likely Prospects

How can we prepare for a full-fledged profession? I believe that a part of the answer lies in the proper selection and training of the young men who will be the superintendents of the future. Suppose we think in terms of those we are individually most concerned with. Perhaps it is your son, or the son of a close friend, or a promising young lad that you have come to know and have affection for. You would like to see him follow your profession. Will you ask that he come up through the ranks as you did, learning things the hard way, rising to the top in spite of all difficulties? Or will you see to it that his education is so directed that it will really support his profession, and that he has an opportunity to learn the basic sciences while in school, so that he may build rapidly on such knowledge when he serves his apprenticeship in actual turf culture? There must be leaders in any profession. Will you encourage your most prominent youths to gain a higher education in the

natural sciences, and in economics and political science so that they may take an equal place with the leaders of other professions in developing our local and national life?

Mind you, I am not asking that you educate your boys to be white collar men. Far from it. Men in your profession must always serve an apprenticeship in actual labor, and never lose contact with the physical operations of the recreational plant which you operate. The point is that they must have something more than a fund of practical knowledge if they are to really serve the profession as it needs to be served for the best interests of all.

Demand Can Be Met

It would be relatively easy to provide for the additional training which I propose. In your day, not more than 10% of the boys who began grade school completed 4 years of high school. Today many boys complete high school and fully half of these are eligible for college or the university. Higher education is for everyone with the necessary ability, and not solely for the sons of rich parents.

Your boy can have the higher education without losing contact with your profession, if you want it that way. For example, at Rutgers University we have planned a college course for boys who wish to specialize in turf management and public recreation. This course of study includes the basic courses in English and all of the natural sciences, including soils, entomology, plant diseases and agronomy, together with special courses in turf culture and engineering. There is opportunity for elective studies in landscaping and floriculture, as well as in psychology, political science, economics, and history. Upon completion of the 4-year course, the Bachelor of Science degree would be awarded, since all of the regular college requirements would have been satisfied. What Rutgers U. proposes to do, can be provided in one or more universities in every state. All that is needed is a request from you that such a course of study be provided.

There is one important requirement that you will need to provide individually, in order that such training become an actuality. You must provide the opportunities for practical work on recreational grounds during the vacation periods and summer months when these young men are not in residence at the university. You must see to it that they gain the necessary practi-

cal experience to supplement the theory they learn in the classroom. You must also be willing to help them get a toehold somewhere after the college training is completed.

It is not a sacrifice that I am suggesting to you. All that is needed is an expanded outlook as to the field of activity which these men will open to your profession. If ways can be devised to greatly reduce the cost of playing golf to the average man, there will be a demand for many more golf courses. With general recognition of the standards held by your profession and the type of service you are equipped to render, your members will be sought to manage recreation facilities of all sorts where turf is an important part of the set-up. However, you must be a little generous of your time and support to bring this about, and prevent such management from gravitating into the hands of other groups. I see no reason why this program of educating young men should mean the displacement of a single

competent superintendent in your organization today.

One final word of explanation. This program of training young men will not reduce the necessity for the type of self education which you mature superintendents are now carrying out. You will still need your meetings, conferences, and schools, to keep you abreast of the latest scientific discoveries on soils, grasses, diseases, insect pests and methods of applying these new findings to practical turf culture. You will need even more to inquire into the proper place of golf and other forms of recreation in the life of your respective communities, and devise methods of bringing such healthy recreation within the reach of the millions who want it. The program of training young men in the fundamentals of your profession will provide you with adequately prepared recruits who can hold the advances which you have made in the past 20 years and permit you to forge ahead in the development of greater opportunities for service.



LELAND GIBSON

Camera Is Key To Gibson's Teaching

By David Marsh

LELAND GIBSON, professional at the Kansas City (Mo.) University Golf Club, has developed and stylized a modern method of golf instruction which has proved invaluable to his club members as well as most lucrative to himself.

At the beginning of last season Gibson took an inventory of his physical and mental assets. He totaled his debits and credits. He examined critically the list of club members, the amount of merchandise sold the year before, the number of lessons given, and came to the conclusion that he should devise a more thorough and systematic method for servicing his members, both for their good and for his own good.

About two weeks before the season opened he mailed to each member a brief personal note suggesting that in order to

get started right for the new season that they sign up for a series of 10 half-hour lessons so that by the time the real summer golfing weather arrived their game would be in good shape for a more successful season than they had ever before experienced. From this point on, Gibson's procedure is this: when the member decides to take the series of lessons Gibson's first step is to set a date to play 9 holes with the member. During the 9 holes of play he may offer a few suggestions, but chiefly he devotes this time to observations and notes on the golfer's outstanding faults.

He notes flaws in the player's swing; he notes where the player uses bad judgment in club selection or in making the shot, and in short, he endeavors to see exactly where the player is losing