



MARCH • GOLFDOM • 1941

Is the Golf Picture Due for a "RETAKE"

What the 'new order' in club operation will be, is not definitely known, but it's certain to include more emphasis on better golf business management

By **HERB GRAFFIS**

"IN another ten years the jobs of golf pros, greenkeepers and managers, as we see those jobs now, may cease to exist except at clubs in the smaller towns.

"In another 15 years the metropolitan district golf club in the form we now see it may become virtually extinct."

Those startling statements were made by one of the nation's most widely known golf authorities. His official position is such that for reasons of discretion he prefers to be anonymous in connection with remarks that warn of a drastic change in the plan of private golf club operation.

Private club officials who are steering their own businesses through revolutionary changes also have expressed the opinion that the operations of private clubs are heading for a general overhauling.

What the new deal, or the new order, in private golf club operation will be, none feel sure enough to forecast. But all qualified officials and department heads of golf clubs who have given thought to the matter agree that the complexity of the private golf club membership, financial and operating problems are such that they

demand the full-time attention of a competent specialist.

And of such men there are but very, very few in the field at present.

It is interesting to this writer to hear, in getting around among golf club officials, the constant popping up of this problem of management. It's particularly interesting because some years ago there was a period of talk in golf about the general-manager idea, so the current discussion about unified management is nothing new. But now it's stronger than it ever was before for the simple reason that changes in the entire national living plan are occurring rapidly.

The success of the general manager plan as adopted at numerous of the larger clubs has been completely dependent on the man, rather than on the plan.

Some general manager experiments have been flops. The man chosen was lacking in executive ability, strength, diplomacy, or knowledge of other departmental operations, or in the authority granted him.

Some general manager experiments, too, have been costly to the clubs that made

them. They resulted in departmental jealousies at the club and there was hell and money to pay all around.

There are clubs at which general management has been installed unofficially due to the intelligent and harmonious relations between department heads. Among clubs where this writer has seen such management in operation to the mutual advantage of department heads and club members, the Philadelphia Country Club and Oakland Hills in the Detroit district stand out as two particularly noteworthy examples of the fortunate clubs at which such condition prevails.

There are general managers appointed who are making conspicuous successes of their jobs, although initial period of general management was not smooth. These men have been club managers, pros or greenkeepers prior to their appointment as general managers. Their appointments have served to demonstrate one thing, that the general management opportunity is open to qualified candidates from each departmental field.

And in at least one especially successful case the general manager who has taken a prominent Eastern club through a perilous situation and put it on a strong, smart operating basis, is a man with only sketchy previous experience in any phase of club management. The job he's done often is cited as Exhibit A for the general manager plan.

GM Idea Here to Stay

Few can wave aside the general management idea as a temporary hunch. The increasing bewilderment of the private clubs confronted with changing conditions among their class of members plainly seems to call for the expert services of men whose business is golf club management of an all-embracing scope.

At this point another widely-travelled and knowing golf authority may be quoted. He says:

"The PGA, the GSA, and the CMAA, representing at least important groups of pros, greenkeepers and managers, are asleep with the boat that carries them all headed toward the rocks.

"There should be a national organization concerned with the general business management of golf. In such an organization the greenkeepers', managers' and pros' associations should be represented, and the purpose of the organization should be the study and coordination of departmental activities for the more efficient conduct and progress of the clubs.

"Each association at present is doing a good job in its limited way. Each organization sincerely desires to serve the clubs while advancing member interests.

Co-ordination Needed

"But what good is it if the PGA helps its members to do better jobs of selling supplies and lessons, if the GSA develops its members into better maintenance of courses for less money, and the CMAA elevates the standard of clubhouse service, if the clubs as a whole are losing out?

"Among the pros, managers and greenkeepers it's now the old story of 'united we stand; divided we fall'.

"Club officials and members see and hear department heads at their jobs knocking each other, generally because of ignorance—not jealousy or fear of their jobs—and these people who are paying the bills condemn the whole lot of department heads as deficient in those business and personal qualities that produce the co-operation the club desperately needs.

"It's time that these major associations in the business phases of golf snap into it, realize and act upon their mutual responsibilities. Otherwise, the bigger jobs and greater incomes resulting from the inevitable growth of golf, will go to but a few of the department heads who are in the picture at present."

The criticism is blunt. It may be that the situation is viewed too darkly. But, in discussing this suggestion of active coordination of the three national golf business departmental organizations with golf club officials in six representative cities recently, I've heard only the hope that the associations would apply themselves collectively to the many problems of the private golf clubs' apparently impending change of life.

PRESIDENTS

GREEN CHAIRMEN

GREENKEEPERS

PROFESSIONALS

MANAGERS

Make certain that you get every issue of GOLFDOM this year. Turn to PAGE 63, now, before you forget it. Fill in the names and addresses requested and mail to GOLFDOM, 14 E. Jackson Blvd., Chicago. Thank you, for your prompt action.