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HOW TO COPE WITH MAINTENANCE PROBLEMS WAR BRINGS

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Thoughtful action, not excuses, needed to meet the tremendously different upkeep problems that clubs will face for the duration

TO SAY that the curtailment of metals, fungicides, insecticides, fertilizers and labor will make greenkeeping in 1942 difficult is no contribution to the easement of the problem of golf course maintenance. In fact, such a statement, though it is a fact, is being over-used and is the handle that many golf clubs and greenkeepers are grasping and using as an alibi even before it is needed.

Personnel Is No. 1 Problem

It is the personnel factor that should give the most concern in 1942. Not the number of employees but the ability of each will have an influence and effect farther reaching than the scarcity of labor, or materials. An error in judgment by an executive or employee will be much more costly than a similar error would have been in 1941. The greenkeeper therefore holds a more important position than he ever had, and probably will have to take a cut in pay when he should really be receiving more.

Throughout the duration and probably for ages afterward, the physiological functions of the grass plant will continue

as usual. Absorption of plant food, photosynthesis, transpiration, translocation, guttation and all other functions will not change any more than the functions of the human body will change.

It will be particularly advantageous to know the functioning of each part of the grass plant and to capitalize that knowledge in cultural practices. This should be consoling, as labor and material saving can be managed so as to reduce the lack of food, water and alike to a very small amount. Remember the grass plant will be in there working with all its might to help you. It wants to live—will live if you give it a chance. Also, remember it has often grown in spite of what has been done to it, and not because of what should or has been done.

Players Will Be Tolerant

Golfers will be the same or better temperamentally. Private club members will be more tolerant of lower maintenance standards because of patriotism and club pride in being thrifty. New golfers on public fee courses may be "crabby" and critical to add to the greenkeepers' trials, but public sentiment should soon muzzle them. Golfers will find that being more

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tolerant will add to the enjoyment and relaxing effect of the game.

Player attitude is so easily influenced by the example of the club officials and employees down to the caddies that it is very important their morale be definitely not critical or full of excuses. The professional and greenkeeper are particularly cautioned to "Carry On" with a smile.

Everyone is using the war as an excuse. Be original and have a local club reason. For example: The Jap beetles may be bad this year but just wait until we get the lead. Anyway, have an optimistic slogan.

It is generally agreed except when cutting the budget that the golf course is considered the most essential department of the club. Golfing goes on after the clubhouse burns down, even after a course is closed. It is now particularly important that the golf course should receive its equitable share of the budget. Equitable as to relative importance, not by the number of departments in the club.

All uncorrected weaknesses in the golf course will be the same as usual plus one more year's accumulation of ill effects. If a weakness has not reached near its limit of tolerance the average player will not be particularly concerned. Why call it to his attention? Other weaknesses may be much more pronounced and reach the point where it will be wise to abandon further help for the duration; then remake. Such a condition can be a blessing in disguise.

Don't Worry Too Much About Weeds

Weeds will take full advantage of any opportunity offered them, but no more so than usual. They are not especially aggressive in war times, and thoughtful management can reduce the weed opportunities to near normal. Clover will probably increase some, yet there is a chance that weather conditions may make it an "off year for clover."

Many suggestions will be made to cut the cost of course maintenance. Don't let an accountant, efficiency expert, or clubhouse sitter make the cuts. Temporary reductions can be made if a complete set of true records have been kept. I use the word "true" in place of "correct" because a correct record can be so kept that its interpretation is false. Truth in records is now more important than accuracy to a penny.

To cut a 36 hole course to 27, a 27 hole course to 18, or an 18 to a 9, may seem to be an easy way to reduce expenses.

I am sure, though, that if a thorough study is made, a large majority of clubs will find that such a reduction of area is unwise, and costly, certainly so in the long run.

An analysis will show that the actual saving cannot possibly be in proportion to the number of holes abandoned. Loss of membership and club morale will further reduce the expected saving and the cost of recovery will be very high in money, and annoying in delay. Perhaps a saving can be made if already poor tees are not cared for. They need rebuilding and neglect will force such construction after the war. Other areas already in poor condition could be left to Nature without undue recovery cost. Traps could also receive less care. Reduction in costs will be necessary but each reduction must be considered from all factors and determined from the point of good business. And don't forget the business management of the grass plant, or piece of equipment.

Can Lower Standards

The standards of 1940-41 were so high that they could be considerably reduced in 1942 and the game will still be played and enjoyed. Golf has stood the test of ages, of wars in England, in Scotland, restricting laws, ridicule and in a sense, persecution. It survived the First World War; it will survive this World War, as all good will survive.

Because of the high standards, slight blemishes will appear in exaggerated severity; don't lose sight of that fact. The promotion of match play and reduction of medal play will be very helpful in keeping satisfactory player comment. Medal play puts too much stress on each stroke, ball lie, and course of the putted ball; it is much more critical. Also, match play may give some duffers a chance to beat the low handicap players a few holes; it would do the duffer good, and be a lot of fun. This match play idea has merit. Think it over.

Now is the time that all club committees, and key employees, including the greenkeeper, should gather in a room, lock the door and throw the key out of the window. They should stay there until the most stubborn give in and the "milquetoast" member asserts his rights. They should decide upon the apportioning of effort, and then place the responsibility for the carrying out of their decisions directly upon the committee and employee

heading each department. There is greater need than ever for such placing of responsibility.

Each committee should be permitted to work out its own program and any wise committee should charge the employee with carrying out the details. The employee—the greenkeeper for example—who has records, knows the grass plant as a physician knows the human body and gives a business balance to his deliberations, will be able to present a practical plan. Other types of plans will be without substantiation.

Plan Should Be Ready

Of course the alert greenkeeper has already prepared and presented such a plan, or has it up his sleeve. He should bring it out and force it upon his committee. Spring is here, and there can be no uncertainties this year or dillying around. Labor will be slower, less experienced, and probably uneasy. Therefore when budgeting the labor hour requirements, add at least 10% and better 15% to the average number of hours consumed for each operation during the past five years. A club may not only be forced to use fewer labor hours, but an added surtax of 15% will be needed to offset inefficiency. Better distribution of labor and management can absorb much of the added 15%. However, don't forget the 15%.

Equipment parts will be hard to replace, and new equipment even harder to get. But the required extra care, and more alert management, can easily reduce the normal replacement 15%. A whole book could be written on that paragraph.

There will be many heretofore unbudgeted labor hours required for the protection of property. Hose, sprinklers, and equipment cannot be left out overnight as they were in 1940 and '41. There must be labor hours spent in returning this equipment to the shop or new pieces will have to be purchased, and where are you going to get them?

The greenkeeper labor should be budgeted by hours, not dollars. Think more than ever of labor as hours. The budgeted money should be converted to labor hours; then, if an increase in budget or wages occurs, either more or fewer hours are going to be available. Forget the dollar after converting it to labor hours. Be sure to apportion the labor hours so that there is a reserve of 12 or 15% of the total for emergencies.



War-time difficulties won't break the spirit of greenkeepers at their work of maintaining the fields on which the populace comes to preserve health and temperamental balance. Trouble is an old story to the greenkeepers. Alf Campbell of Niagara Falls CC shows grubs in bank along green to a club director in revealing that in greenkeeping some damned thing is happening every minute.



O. J. Noer photos

Turf along edge of green starting to thin out before algae. Due to elm roots from tree in rear.

This apportioning of labor hours will show at once where cuts in maintenance standards must and can be made. There are too many possible cuts to discuss here. One thought, however—if greens are clipped less frequently, be sure to raise the height of cut.

Golf clubs seldom spend as much as 6% of their total budget for fertilizer. Any reduction in fertilizer is therefore not very large. Also, if the same number of dollars is spent for fertilizer this year as was last, there will be a reduction in the amount used. Can a golf course afford to reduce the amount expended and the surtax of a less quantity when the total amount involved is about 6% of all expenditures? Only a very very few can.

Continuing the usual fertilizer program will boost morale, save considerable water, reduce compaction of soil, be an insurance for good turf in 1943, and have many

other advantages. Past practices have proven the folly of neglecting fertilization. There appears to be sufficient fertilizer for 1942 but an uncertainty for 1943. It might be good business to reserve a small portion (not hoard) for use in 1943.

Another side of the fertilizer situation is to purchase only fertilizer enough for the greens and let the normal amount used for tees and fairways be diverted to farm crops. There is a question as to the patriotic value of such highly approved recreation as golf as opposed to the comparative small quantity of food raised from golf course fertilizer.

Manures, especially poultry manure, if properly composted should be included in the fertilizer purchases to save chemicals. Care should be exercised before accepting offers of untreated sewage sludges, and "fertile peats."

The absence of arsenate of lead is probably the factor second in importance to trained personnel. Certain grubs must be killed by a stomach poison, or gassed. Carbon disulphide emulsion can be used for the latter, and unless lead is on hand the carbon disulphide should be stocked for an emergency, or until the substitutes for lead are marketed. Well cared for and well fed turf is more resistant to grub injury than weak turf.

Clean Rough Is Essential

The problem of the cost of lost balls and play delay versus the cost of cleaner rough areas is definitely local to each club. Public fee courses certainly must have a cleaner rough, as play will increase and time is a considerable factor.

If the rough is permitted to grow (and this is not advisable) there should be local rules about throwing out the balls and a systematic combing of the rough under supervision of the greenkeeper.

The caddiemaster has his opportunity to prove his worth by making his caddie system reduce the lost ball hazard. There is a definite premium for better caddying. Drainage of ponds will still preserve the hazard, but added nuisances and poor bottoms may nullify any saving on lost balls.

There appears to be no need to use the golf courses for food production. Few golf courses could raise profitable crops without expensive alterations and considerable fertilizer and lime.

Pasturing might be profitable to the dairyman but very expensive to the club unless the fairways were fertilized to

replace that taken away in beef, milk, wool or mutton.

To play winter rules throughout the year seems to be conceded by all. The good effect upon the morale will be the major asset, and should not be considered lightly. Some turf will be benefitted, others will be injured. Temporary closing of a green because of soil, frost or water condition will effect the saving of many labor hours and improve the cultural condition.

Give Equipment Special Care

The use of equipment must be carefully evaluated to get the most possible use without too rapid depreciation. No machine should be used for work to which it is not adapted. The long time cost is too great and dangerous and serious cultural losses can occur. Closer supervision of the equipment and its use will be needed to protect the equipment and the unskilled operator. Don't forget the latter.

There seems to be no warrant to spend effort on large scale weed control. Higher cut, especially when the weeds are small, will help keep them under control, and well fed grass competes well with weeds.

Much saving in labor hours and purchased water can be made by reducing watering, and as over-watering is generally practiced, such a procedure should not hurt the cultural condition of the course. Weeds would be less aggressive and compaction reduced.

Fungi, like the grass plant, will develop and grow as usual. Priorities will not affect their life cycle. An understanding of the growth of the fungi and management to attack it during its weakest period will effect a saving in both fungicides and grass plant. Two medium applications of potash, 3 lbs. per 1000 sq. ft., will be well worth while—one just prior to the disease season, and the other about half way through. Dusting with hydrated lime, if done at the right time, will reduce the severity of an attack. Good food, less water, and earlier working hours on the course can also be credited to the reduction of severity of an attack.

This is going to be a season of testing, and results will depend upon the individuals, or personnel.

Each club's financial policy will be tested. To survive it must be overseen by competent persons who will consider the long-time investment.

The club's policy will be tested. Each

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department should be required to show a real business profit. The business profit need not be all dollars, but satisfaction, morale and condition. Each operation should be carefully evaluated.

The club's social policy will be tested. The family and non-social climbers must be recognized. There are many very nice people that will be an asset to any club. These have been rejected or directed to other clubs because of the social policy. Real friendliness and democracy is needed.

The club's officials will be tested. They must be less influenced by whims of members, promotion experts and unsubstantiated claims.

The club's employees will be tested. The greenkeeper's ability in each phase of his duty will have much more influence over the results than in 1941.

The strong and prepared will survive. But the weak cannot survive unless they put forth real mental effort. Each of the lessons of the period 1917-1929 must be reviewed and the correct answers found.

This is a year of opportunity for able men to obtain and hold important executive positions in golf clubs. First, they must show their ability in their particular field of specialization.

This year is not so much concerned with what materials can be obtained but how they, and that which is on hand, are used. Whatever happens to a club, remember, "As long as you carry on you are still going. If you stop you are stopped."

WHAT'S NEW

The spectre of possible lack of golf balls which has been haunting early season 19th-hole sessions ever since the Government's rubber ban, has been chased by an announcement of Wilson Sporting Goods Co. "New balls for old" is the promise of the new Wilson Plan.

"This nation needs golf to keep fit for the tasks of war," said L. B. Icely, president of Wilson Sporting Goods Co., "and we intend to see that the nation has plenty of good golf balls."

"We are confident that the Wilson plan will save golf for the duration of the war," he said, "but it can do this only if it enlists the cooperation of golfers throughout the country."

"To help the Wilson Plan succeed, your used golf balls must be turned in to the pro. Wilson Sporting Goods Co. will pay cash for any used ball of recognized quality manufacture. The exact scale of prices will be announced soon," Icely adds.

Icely estimates that some 3,000,000 dozen cut or unplayable balls are available. If sold into channels that assure their reaching the Wilson Sporting Goods Co. factory these would enable the company to place on the market very nearly an equal number of balls virtually new.

Conversely, every ball thrown into the junk heap, or carelessly disposed of will be a vote to shorten the life of the game.

"Save balls and you'll save golf," Icely stated, and he gave convincing assurance that Wilson golf balls produced by the new war-time process will be of the same size and contain the same amount of real rubber as those of pre-war manufacture.

Entertainment chairmen of clubs in the middle-west will find the Louis W. Cohan Theatrical

Customers calling at Spalding's Chicago offices find a cordial greeting awaiting in this recently revised golf pro department, located on the second floor at 211 S. State St., Chicago.

