

George S. May's Work Puts Tam O' Shanter In Forefront Among Nation's Golf Clubs

By KARL SUTPHIN



Geo. S. May

Read how smart operating procedure put this metropolitan district club on paying basis.

I'M NOT GOING to be able to learn and cure all the troubles of golf club management but I'm going to make a good job of trying." George S. May, president of the Tam O' Shanter Country Club, was talking. And when George talks he is speaking the piece as a highly successful business engineer who has made fortunes for his clients and himself by looking for operating flaws with sharp, questioning eyes.

Last year May promoted at his club the largest prize money tournament of the year and from July 20 through 26 the \$15,000 Tam O' Shanter Open and the All American Amateur will be conducted; the Tam Open again as the biggest purse event of the year. This circus-style promotion which has established the big drawing power of tournament golf at \$1 gate, has made Tam O' Shanter nationally known. But what isn't nationally known about the club is its business story into which the canny May has written chapters of new and successful ideas.

May is an old-time house-to-house book salesman who turned engineer, then business consultant. He is a fellow who goes for the loudest sport shirts that ever assailed an eye, and sports coats that pale the Grand Canyon at sunset. But don't let that fool you. Diamond Jim Brady, one of the world's greatest salesmen and keenest business analysts, also was one of those who had a flair for spectacular trimming, but gave a sharp appraisal to every milled nick on a dime when business was concerned. George May is that way.

Became Chief Owner in '36

May became the chief owner of the Tam O' Shanter club in 1936.

He'd joined the club in 1927 and went through the usual routine of becoming a member of committees. Mostly he was in-

terested in the club as a place for having a good time. Right there, he will point out, is the first and highest handicap against running a club in a businesslike manner. Members join to have a good time.

In 1936 the Tam O' Shanter clubhouse, near to the northwest limits of the city of Chicago, burned. The club was in hock and had been having the troubles common to not a few clubs. Some members were willing to let the grounds go back to the Indians. George May was prevailed on to put \$10,000 into the property as a long-shot investment. Eighty-four others put in \$500 apiece. Now George has \$384,000 in the Tam O' Shanter plant. When the material and labor situation permits, \$50,000 more will be spent on the plant. The club is appraised at \$650,000.

Tam Is 'Sound Investment'

Furthermore, May, looking at Tam O' Shanter strictly as a business proposition, says the investment is a sound one. There is no reason why a country club couldn't be a good investment despite the seasonal and daily weather factor controlling golf, May is convinced. However, he believes that for each year the war lasts about 25% of the golf clubs will go broke or have to go through reorganization because of their failure to adjust themselves to wartime conditions. This will be definitely damaging to war effort, May thinks. He says there has been a serious waste of man-power in the disregard of executives for their own physical condition and in executives' failure to budget time for recreation that will keep them mentally full of zip, clarity, and confidence.

May maintains that one of the great advances in American production methods has been that of providing recreation facilities for employees, so they'll have an added incentive for living and working. If executives had devoted as much atten-

Ben Parola, Blue Hills (N. J.) CC pro, has marked a triangular area on the club's first fairway. Players pay 25 cents on their drives and if a drive comes to rest within the triangular space Ben pays the driver a first grade ball.

tion to planning of their own recreation there'd be fewer physical breakdowns, probably fewer mistakes of management, and considerably less friction in operations, May reckons. This phase of golf club potential value seldom is noted, according to the Tam O' Shanter chief.

Where the representative golf club makes its major mistakes are in the following respects according to May:

- (1) Too frequent turnover in management, with officials and directors seldom given an opportunity to learn all they should about efficient management of the club's affairs.

- (2) Lack of a plan for year-around use of the club facilities.

- (3) Lack of appeal to all members of a family.

- (4) Failure to make plans for attractive volume.

- (5) Failure to give management a chance to function.

- (6) Failure to hire best available men, coordinate their operations, and give them incentive to perform beyond the extent necessary to merely hold their jobs.

- (7) Failure to energetically advertise and promote the club.

Know What Members Want

Now, in showing how Tam O' Shanter operations meet these points, consider first that Tam O' Shanter has had only one new director since May became the head of its management. The directors not only know the club's business operations but the members, and have learned to closely coordinate what the members want with what the members are willing to pay for as a good investment in recreation. There are bound to be cases of members who want details, or even the whole scheme of club operations, revised to suit them. Much of the trouble of many clubs dates from yielding to the pressure of a few such members instead of selling this minority on the wisdom and satisfaction of a plan that is agreeable and financially sound for the entire membership. Failure to handle such situations often results in the officials and directors themselves not being fully conversant with the problem and its solution.

In making full use of the club plant,

and in drawing a year-around volume of business Tam O' Shanter uses a full complement of sports facilities for young and middle-aged and oldsters. Golf, of course, is by far the main attraction. Swimming, tennis, skating, skiing, shooting are other outdoor events. Much is made of the Tam O' Shanter weekly vaudeville shows in which some excellent professional talent appears, and of the keno games. Good meals at reasonable prices are one of the strong magnets at Tam. The club loses money on its meals but they draw a volume that spends at the clubhouse and the net result of excellent cuisine is a profit.

Gets Assistant for Manager

On this matter of the evening entertainment at the club May brings out the point that such a program is a killer for a manager. He maintains that no man can stand the long hours demanded by such a program. Hence the manager's labor at Tam is divided between the house manager and a capable assistant whose major job is that of accounting but who can get in and pitch to keep the manager from killing himself with an ungodly stretch of hours.

Tam O' Shanter's members pay \$192 a year, and no assessments. Their social members, of whom there are 95, pay \$50 yearly. There are 280 regular members. The social members get everything except golf for themselves and their families. The per capita spending of the "social" members in the clubhouse exceeds that of the "regular" members.

A great point of getting all members acquainted is made at Tam O' Shanter. Men and women committees have the responsibility of getting the members known to each other, and without any obviously organized procedure any one member who comes out to the club always is put into a foursome.

Tam O' Shanter takes trade and other association tournaments Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays, when member play is light. It selects these tournaments carefully and gets all of them it wants to take. Tam members know that the volume of business brought in by these events makes it possible to operate the club on a sound basis that gives members more than they'd otherwise get for their money. The additional traffic is handled with no more pressure than would be normal on the active Saturdays, Sundays and holidays at the club.

Many who have attended association

tournaments at the club eventually join Tam O' Shanter.

The Tam O' Shanter Opens, which have become nationally famous, are great advertising for the club, giving the members plenty to talk about pridefully, and bringing in new members. The Open idea was born when May paid \$3.85 to see a National Open day's play. The small crowd for a great event struck George as showing a flaw in business management. So to prove his case he puts a price of \$1 on a day's ticket to the Tam O' Shanter event.

This year Tam O' Shanter furnishes bus tickets to and from terminals of street car lines and L stations in Chicago, to the club, for the tournament, so the \$1 ticket for the Open really costs the patron 84 cents. May says business experience repeatedly has demonstrated that a price of \$1 draws considerably more than double the number of customers drawn by a \$1.65 price. He is confident of the biggest golf crowd ever drawn, when the gate for the Tam Open and All-American Amateur events is added.

Full page advertisements in all the Chicago newspapers are boosting the championships at Tam O' Shanter. That

campaign alone will cost approximately \$11,000 in space. More than 100,000 letters and circulars have been mailed on ticket sales. The Tam members themselves each agree to take 20 tickets. That's part of the club by-laws.

There are six major outlets for ticket sales. The tickets themselves look like \$60 fight tickets instead of the traditional golf event tags.

This May overlooks no chance to make the club a businesslike establishment. The new caddie house at Tam is virtually a clubhouse for the boys. The facilities attracting boys to Tam, and the excellent training and management the boys receive make the Tam caddies an all-star outfit. The pro shop—and the equipment barn and course maintenance equipment are models for clubs. Tam members and officials claim that in Bill Gordon as pro and Ray Didier as greenkeeper they've got two of the most competent men in their respective departments of golf. There's plenty more that Tam members brag about as giving them great value out of what they spend for recreation at Tam, and that's probably the most conclusive evidence of good management of a country club.

USGA Advises Tryouts Before Large Scale Treatments of Chemical Substitutes

THERE will be a steadily increasing demand for substitutes for many of the chemicals commonly used as fungicides, insecticides, and herbicides, as these materials cease to become available either because of their role in the all out war effort or because of the fact that they can no longer be imported due to shipping difficulties or to the turn of the war in island outposts.

Unfortunately, with a greatly depleted technical staff it will not be possible for the Green Section to test the many possible substitutes. Before using any of these substitutes in large-scale treatments it would be acting in the interest both of economy and better turf to try them out on a small scale first. If recommendations of institutions or men who are conducting large-scale experimental programs are not available, those of the manufacturer should be followed or, if

necessary, modified to suit any particular set of conditions.

Since most recommendations for use of these materials on turf are given in terms of the amount of chemical to be used on 1,000 sq. ft., areas of 100 sq. ft. make good trial plots where relatively large areas of turf are involved. On lawns or smaller areas, smaller sized plots such as 5 by 5-foot plots may be preferred. Untreated plots as well as some treated with the commonly accepted treatments should be included on as uniform turf as is available. Routine maintenance practices should be followed on all the plots in any one series.

In applying fungicides, insecticides and herbicides to test plots, it is important that the exact rate be known so that it can be duplicated, if desirable, in the future. This precision should be followed when measuring and marking off plots, as well