

HOW TO GEAR YOUR GREENS CREW TO WAR

By W. E. LANGTON

PERHAPS one of the most important functions the superintendent has to face today is the handling of men. We are called upon today to try and fit square pegs in round holes. With most if not all of our young men in the fighting forces or in defense plants, we are left with some of our old reliables, aided by the flotsam and jetsam that few people want and who can hardly get a living in boom times. But today it is a question of take what you can or do without, so it's up to the superintendent to make the most of what he has and get a maximum of results from a minimum of inclination.

Some few years ago I witnessed the beginning of a flood relief project to aid our unemployed. The work was started by a young army engineer who one could see at first glance had very little experience in handling men. Five hundred men turned up early one morning to assist in the work. Among them were lawyers, real estate men, peddlers, agents, waiters, cooks, fat men, sick and healthy, colored and white, all seeking the wherewithal to eat. For one whole day it was a chaotic mess. Weak men pushing overladen wheelbarrows which were far too heavy for them to handle, strong men carrying small drinking water pails with tin cups, men in too compact a mass for freedom of action and most everybody pretending effort and doing little. It was a fine example of lack of experience in diagnosing quickly what a man is suited for.

A Tough Job at Best

Now I don't blame the young engineer. It was his first experience in handling new men whom he had never seen before, and not the best material to work with anyway. And there is no doubt that he would profit from the mistakes he made that first day of responsibility. But Uncle Sam was at the back of the project. The unemployed had to be fed and young army men had to get experience so nobody was hurt very much unless it was the taxpayer, who seems quite willing to carry the load without much protest.

But clubs have not the power of taxing

the public nor have they unlimited resources. Hence, if the superintendent pulls a few boners the clubs suffer. So the first thing to do is to look very carefully at the character, and physical makeup of each man in your employ and see that each man is doing the work which he is best fitted to do. Try to allot the work that each man prefers, not neglecting the fact that a preponderance of men prefer an easy job. He will do it so much more efficiently and quicker than if it is just a job to earn a few dollars. Balance the work so that each man gets an equal proportion of the hard monotonous work. Do not allow a man to become disgruntled by claiming he has to do all the dirty work. Try to create a harmonious spirit among the men. Treat all men respectfully and decent without being mushy. Always remember when you were a worker in the same position as they are now. A little honest competition will help sometimes, but do not overdo it for the physically weaker man will fail and become despondent and quit, or if too willing is liable to hurt himself. Take a personal interest in the men without showing favoritism, and if possible give a little help when it is needed. Do not shout and bawl out men, but if complaints have to be made take the man aside and say your piece with courage and dignity.

What Can You Do?

Now we have gotten rid of the personal element. Let's see what we can do on the golf course. First of all we must know definitely what the club can afford to spend. What is the club's chance of survival? How many oldsters are there to keep the club alive, also men who are too valuable in science, technical work and defense work to go in the Army. How far are you from easy transportation? Get in a huddle with your green-chairman, get his viewpoint and see what he wants and what the club is able to spend on the course. Do not promise a Cadillac course with a Ford income. In other words state plainly what you can do with so many men and so much material.

When you know all these facts and you

have to cut, in order to keep the course going, find out what are the unnecessary things you can do without. There are so many little things that can almost be classed as luxuries—like painting signs, boundary posts, flag poles, benches, bridges, parking ground ribbons, fences and a thousand and one little artistic touches that are nice to have and yet for a short period of time can be dispensed with. Then there are the flower beds; annuals, which require a lot of attention, can be replaced with some hardy perennial or a few shrubs that require little irrigation and scarcely any attention. See whether it is not cheaper to buy flowers for the clubhouse tables than to pay high priced labor to grow them. Today one can get a lot of flowers for the price of a gardener.

Organize your men so there is no overlapping of effort. Make each man responsible for a certain district. He should take care of his traps, irrigate and cut his greens, change the markers, see that clean towels are in position, water in the washing machine, and keep clean and tidy his particular district. Provide sufficient equipment and tools so that men do not have to waste time in walking hither and yon for everything they need. See that all tools are kept sharp and in first-class condition. Older men cannot work with dull tools. Replace power equipment for hand machines wherever possible. Try a close cut method on fairways and see whether it lessens manpower and tractor use. If one can cut once a week instead of twice by lowering the blades of the machine and still give satisfaction it will be a saving of time and material. Forget for the time being some of the remote corners of the links where it will do little harm. Some pruning of trees and hedges, and shrubs, sweeping of leaves, may have

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to go by the board. Do not try to keep the whole course manicured to death and irrigated unless you have a full complement of men and resources. You will only end in failure if you try to do too much.

On most holes certain sections in front of the tee for 125 yards can be allowed to go back to nature. Just cut sufficiently to prevent lost balls and a slow-up of play. If greens are over 5,000 sq. ft., reduce in size. It will save a lot in labor, fertilizer and machinery, besides making the players pitch more accurately. Wherever possible reduce the length of fairways consistent with good golf. Make the course a pleasure to play for the ordinary average golfer and forget for the time being the super-golfers, for most of them are in the fighting forces or defense work. Always keep in mind that golf is a morale builder and a golf course is a place where men can find a haven for relaxation from the cares and worry of these troublesome times. Your course should be so constructed and maintained to give a maximum of pleasure with a minimum of effort and cost to the greatest majority of those who play the game.

If play still declines and it is not possible to keep 18 holes in good shape, choose the best holes where there will be a well balanced 9 holes. It may mean using some fairway for substitute tees and a rearrangement sometimes gives wonderful results and much satisfaction to the players.

It is difficult to give a panacea for all the golf ills that inflict our clubs today. What is suitable in one place does not fit into another. If one can keep on the status quo so much the better, but for those who are or may be liable to experience difficulties perhaps a suggestion gathered from this article may help. If it does assist the writer will have been amply repaid.