

Managers Find Lessons In Wartime Operations

★ **O**NE MARVEL of golf club operation in wartime has been the apparent smoothness with which house operations have been conducted. Labor, food and liquor shortages and inability to repair or replace equipment and supplies have made managers prematurely gray, but adjustments have been made so expertly that in numerous instances members and officials have commented that clubhouse operations have been notably satisfactory.

One explanation, according to Donald H. Rapelye, mgr., Wampanoag CC, West Hartford, Conn., is "in these days members are willing to overlook a great deal and are far less demanding. Nevertheless, the managers are carrying a terrific load." Wampanoag house operations, typical of those of the better clubs, were conducted at a loss for many years prior to the war, but for the past 15 months have been in the black. Many of the revisions of operations necessitated by wartime conditions and acceptable to members because of the prevailing conditions, probably will be retained after the war, Rapelye believes.

The main economy idea that may hold over after the war is the change from the old policy of keeping open virtually at all hours, says Wayne D. Miller, mgr., Cincinnati CC, and pres., Club Managers' Assn.

Miller remarks:

"Club presidents are quite right that their club managers have done a fine job during wartime. Why? They were faced with problems that called for solution. A club manager worthy of the name must first of all be foresighted and resourceful to the extreme or he could not be successful. The "great manipulator" should be the term and that not only applies to war time but to normal times too.

"How does the manager handle the wartime job successfully? Clubs as a general rule were extravagantly operated.

If Mr. Member wanted his dinner on the 18th green at an unusual hour, he got it that way. Mr. Member was served the choicest of the choicest of any type of dish he desired and at a modest price, but that service cost money, more help, more of everything. This was one manipulation the club manager had to do, centralize operation and service.

"The choicest of foods were no longer to be had because rationing took care of that. The next best thing was to make beans taste better than sirloin steaks. With this sleight-of-hand trick accomplished it became necessary to regulate the hours of service. Now with a smooth job of selling Mr. Member to cooperate with him. The stage was set for operation on a modest scale with a simplified menu and curtailed service. The results have been extremely good. The club manager has been able to keep up to nearly standard all his operations, the demand has doubled, the membership roster full. Result . . . profit.

"Profit can be misleading. We must keep in mind that the club's equipment is shot to pieces and not being able to keep up these needs, means false profits.

"Supply and demand will govern Post War operation and 'Mr. Manipulator' will again serve Mr. Member on the 18th green at an unusual hour with the choicest of the choicest dish at a modest price.

"I can see nothing in the Post War era that can be used or salvaged from the war period unless it might be hours of club operation. That alone depends on the labor market which will be governed by supply and demand. 'Mr. Manipulator' is going to be faced with complete reorganization and training of club personnel and it will not be easy, but do it he will."

One of the toughest of the pre-war problems of managers was getting reservations in advance for meals. Now, at many clubs, if reservations aren't made,

meals are unavailable. Another problem was that of getting the members and guests to haul themselves away from the beverages and get into the party food service at the appointed time. Now if they don't come in, the help quits at the time set for finishing, and the tardy members simply don't get served. Overtime labor charges, in case the help is willing to work overtime, are so stiff the tardy members are rebuked, and in some instances, made to pay the charges.

In view of his many added duties the manager himself cannot administer the personal petting to each member as in the days of yore. Then the manager was expected, in the words of one veteran, "to stay up until the last drunk was kissed good night; then be on the job at day-break to be in personal attendance on two fussy old members who wanted breakfast at the club prior to playing an early-round."

Victor Elliott, mgr. and asst. sec.-treas., of the excellently conducted Pittsburgh Field club, points out that wartime inability to make needed capital expenditures should not mislead club officials as they consider the current profits of clubhouse operations.

Elliott's view of the prevailing situation:

"Club managers throughout the country should be and are very grateful to receive the comments of the number of club presidents who think that clubhouse operations are running smoother under existing conditions.

"At whatever club this condition exists, you may rest assured that the entire membership is taking into consideration the difficulties, trials and tribulations the manager is confronted with in his daily routine. Aside from the numerous reports and details in respect to food and gasoline rationing, the liquor and food situation,

there is the help problem. Under normal conditions we operated during the season, with a staff of 50 to 60 employes, at present we have 18 employes in our clubhouse. The question is how long it will be possible to operate under these conditions.

"In order to alleviate overworking our staff, we adopted Monday closing, also designated hours of service in the dining room. Before the war it was possible to give dining room service from 8 A. M. until midnight. At present we serve luncheons from 11:30 to 2:30, sandwiches only from 2:30 until 5 and dinner from 5:30 until 8:30. If the Monday closing and present dining room service can be continued after the war, there is no question as to its desirability as a great economic step in club operations.

"Last year, despite curtailed activities, was a very successful financial year and from the looks of the first 6 months of 1944, our net results will exceed most of the flush years of the twenty's.

"We must however, take into consideration the fact that very few clubs are making capital expenditures due to the scarcity of materials. It should behoove the clubs to set aside a cash reserve, on a monthly basis, to cover replacements and repairs after the war.

"There is no question in my mind that present conditions has taught the club manager economical operations and it will be fine experience in years to come. It has taught us that it is possible to operate a club successfully without a lot of things we thought essential; simplification of menus; a much closer contact with the operating staff; the finer details of club management and also what a great help your Board of Directors and members can be under these trying times.

"Clubs are being operated today on a more business-like basis and the net financial results in most clubs prove this fact."

Memories of the Golden Days at Edinburgh

ED FITZJOHN, veteran pro at the Albany (N.Y.) CC, comments in a nostalgic vein on the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers article that appeared in June *GOLFDOM*:

"That club was my home for 23 years. There my father was clubmaster or manager, going with them from Musselburgh in 1879 and removing to Muirfield in 1890 where he died in 1895.

"I got my experience in golf while there. I went through every department of the business, such as club management, club and ball making, greenkeeping and learning the fundamentals of golf in developing my game and acquiring the art

and science of instruction. I played my first championship over Muirfield in 1895, the year Harry Vardon won his first British championship, beating J. H. Taylor in the playoff after a tie.

"The gentlemen mentioned in your article, Maxwell, Laidlay, and Balfour-Melville were all fine golfers. I played many a time with them in matches. They were all medalists of the Company.

"Those were the days of Freddie Tait, Johnny Ball, Harold Hilton and many other prominent amateur golfers. The prominent pros of those days were Kirkcaldy, Willie Fernie, Willie and Hughie Avchterlonie, Archie Simpson, Ben Sayers, Willie Park, Jr. and others; from all of them I got much valuable instruction and much experience in competition."