

Wartime Machinery Upkeep

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NEVER in the history of golf has the overhauling and repairing of the tractors, power mowers, and the various pieces of equipment and machinery required to keep the golf courses running been so vital to the greenkeeper and the club as now.

Machinery Deteriorating

Golf course machinery has been taking it on the nose these past two seasons, mainly due to: 1st. Shortage of necessary repair parts; 2nd. Lack of skilled mechanics to service them, and last, but certainly not least, because of unskilled and untrained operators who can take more out of machines in the shortest time, than the best mechanic or the shrewdest greenkeeper can ever put back in.

Replacements and Inventories

Now at most clubs where machines are the crux of the upkeep operations, the machines are beginning to show signs of wear, and there is little prospect of enough new replacements to put them all in A-1 shape. The greenkeeper will have to bring all his energy, past experience, and know-how to bear, in order to get all his equipment ready for another season. When he takes inventory he will probably find stocks are very low, with many important parts exhausted altogether and with little chance of getting supplies from manufacturer or dealer. Then he begins to realize just what a job it is going to be to get his equipment ready for another hard gruelling season.

Lack of Skilled Operators Big Handicap

It would not be so bad if he could be sure of finding a few skilled operators, but he no sooner gets hold of what he thinks may be a good man, and after spending a lot of time and money training him, and running the risk of having at least one machine knocked out of commission in doing so, the guy leaves, often without notice, and so it goes. Tough on machines, tough on the greenkeeper.

A couple of years or so ago *Golfdom* published an article entitled "Mechanize and Save." Well, we mechanized to save, and found that it was to save many courses from closing down for the duration, and now that same mechanizing is threatening to back-fire at us and stop us

from operating altogether, if we cannot get the necessary parts to fix the machines up and keep them going for some time longer. Some of our sympathizers fix the time at about one more year; then, they say your troubles will be all over. Be that as it may, we have to get ready for the 1945 season, and if any club or its greens chairman thinks that their greenkeeper is going to have a nice long holiday this winter, they had better pay a visit to the equipment sheds and the tool-house, and find out just how little they have to work with, or are likely to get, in the way of spare or replacement parts necessary to put the equipment in serviceable condition. Yes—they'll find inventories very low, and while it will be possible to secure some replacement parts, others cannot be secured anywhere at any price. And, if that is so what are we to do?

Try Makeshifts

In some cases it is possible to have small parts made at a local machine shop. We have had steel shafts made, if we can supply the steel, using discarded steel shafts turned down. We have also had gears filled and reground and new teeth cut; makeshift jobs, but they have served their purpose, all of which goes to show what Mr. Greenkeeper is up against, whether his club or the greens chairman know it or not. At Essex County we are what might be called fully mechanized. In other words, any maintenance job that we don't have a machine to do, is not done at all, as no labor is available for hand-work, and has not been for the past two seasons. This would seem to simplify matters, but it is not as simple as it looks. For instance, we have more individual pieces of self powered equipment, than we have men to handle them, meaning, that 3 or 4 men out of a crew of possibly 8 men (and that is about the maximum number we have had for two eighteen hole courses these past two seasons . . . on many occasions the number has been down to 5) have to be trained to handle several different pieces of equipment. Is it any wonder then that the greenkeeper is turning gray or that so many machines are in the hospital waiting for new parts to put them in condition for opening another season.

Manufacturers and Dealers Cooperating

To offset this gloomy picture it is necessary to point out that the manufacturers of course equipment and their dealers have been cooperating most closely with the greenkeeper in trying to keep their machines running, and the fact that so many courses have been reported to be in excellent condition despite an abnormally dry summer in the past, bears this out. It could not have been done otherwise.

Lessons Have Been Learned

What have we learned from all this, that will pay dividends in the future maintenance of our courses? 1st: It has been brought home to many clubs and greenkeepers alike, that the better machine are going to stay with us. 2nd: That no matter how good, nor how fool-proof they may be, we are going to need a mechanic to keep them running at ca-

capacity service, at least until we are able to train and hold experienced operators. 3rd: That more and better machines are required, some of them to replace hand operations, especially as the older type of men who could use a scythe become extinct.

Manufacturers Should Consult Greenkeeper

In the not far distant future the manufacturer will be glad to consult the greenkeeper, more so than he has done in the past, as to the type and design of many of the machines he will make, especially those to be used for special purposes. For example, mowing the rough; spiking; cutting steep banks; raking sand traps, and gathering fallen leaves. There is much room for improvement and many greenkeepers have been pondering these matters over and some of them have definite ideas as to what is best suited for specific operations.

Mechanical Ball Retriever for Driving Ranges

Below is pictured the newest thing in golf ball retrievers for driving ranges. The new ball retriever is described by William H. Nicholas, Park supt. City of Pasadena: "We are using one of these new machines on our driving range at the Pasadena Municipal golf course.

"The retriever consists of a series of ply-wood discs, just a trifle narrower in spacing than the diameter of a golf ball. The weight of the equipment spreads the discs allowing them to pick up the balls. And, as it rolls around, fingers push the ball out into boxes in front.

"These boxes are removable and you can drop your balls into your buckets. The framework in the front is made to pull by hand; however we have put another hitch on as you will see in the picture and will pull it with a Cushman Glide. The interesting thing about it is that in our situation it is a big conservation of manpower as it replaces two boys who used to pick up the balls and does the job much

more efficiently and quickly. The machine is designed and built by Mr. Martin E. Fonken, 308 East Grinnell Drive, Burbank, California.

"Recently, we started the construction of a 990-yard 9-hole Pitch Putt golf course in an 11 acre piece of ground that was a large estate on our main downtown street, less than three-quarters of a mile from the center of down town. We were able to secure priorities from the War Production Board because the area is just one block from the Army hospital and we believe will help serve in the great rehabilitation program for our servicemen.

"In addition we propose to encourage the youth of the community to use it, and we are designing the course so that the greens will be large enough and should prove an excellent practice area for the many golfers who are members of all the golf courses in the Pasadena area. Incidentally the design and supervision of construction is being done by Mr. William P Bell.

