

Expert Maintenance Shows Profit at Smaller Club

By **NORMAN WESTFALL**

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The job of the superintendent at a small golf club today is more difficult and probably more important than ever before. Members get around a lot now and they want their course to compare favorably with those on which large budgets are efficiently spent by expert and thrifty men. The greenkeepers too get around due to their association meetings and schools and their sights get set high. As vice pres. of the Iowa Greenkeepers' Assn. I know that each of our members strives to have his course in each detail up to the highest standard of any course we visit. Although we realize that the limitations of money in most cases make this aim impossible of achievement yet the aspiration and effort has been of great value to all clubs at which our members are located.

The greenkeeper at the smaller club, as proud as he may be of his club and the results of his work, is reluctant to compare his performance with that at larger clubs. He knows what a vast amount of work he wants to do and regards as his future program but always is keenly conscious of the necessity of keeping costs of operation so low that golf is made available on a private club basis to the desirable people of his community.

But when he compares his course in condition with the small town courses that are maintained on a part-time basis by neighboring farmers he feels that he has

contributed something to the game and certainly has demonstrated the good judgment of club officials in hiring a trained man and providing an earning opportunity to keep the man encouraged and striving.

The Crestmoor case I believe may be submitted as an example of what hard work and a good background in greenkeeping will do for a club.

A Rough Start

I came to Crestmoor in August, 1937. For six years I'd been in course work and had been trained by my father-in-law, Wm. Keating, supt. of the Des Moines (Ia.) G&CC. Bill Keating is a widely known veteran and the best teacher of course maintenance a man possibly could get.

The course was new and coming onto one's first job as greenkeeper in August didn't stack any cards in my favor. The club was not in condition to pay a greenkeeper's salary so in addition to taking over course maintenance I was club manager. My wife handled the catering for the clubhouse. There was no other help except a canteen man. I don't need to tell anybody who knows the first thing about the golf business how Mrs. Westfall and I had to work until we were ready to drop.

But we were determined to make Crestmoor a model and an exhibit of our efforts of which we, the members and the entire community could boast.



Crestmoor country club was made a magnet for golf by expert course care.

It was a rather dismal prospect that confronted me on the course. The greens were full of dandelions and clover. They were as hard as sidewalks. The fairways were weedy and thin. I suppose we had just about as near 100% dandelion fairways as any course in the country.

The machinery was very poor, long past the stage when it probably would have been discarded by a larger club, and it could be operated only after more make-shift and some major repairs.

There were about 75 playing members of a membership of 150 and they were ardent enthusiasts to play on that layout and call it a golf course.

Begins Improving Greens

The first detail of my program was top-dressing and fertilizing the greens about every two weeks. By fall the players were beginning to talk about the improvement and the signs of progress made me hopeful.

Then came two very tough years. Business conditions were not good in our territory and the total membership fell to about 85. It looked as though my first job as a greenkeeper might be a flop but all that could be done about it was work harder.

I kept digging, altering some of the greens and rebuilding tees. The players who had continued by that time were beginning to talk loud and proud about their course and how it was better than other small town layouts. The word began to get around. This encouragement kept me from tossing in the sponge. I wonder if club members realize how much recognition of his work and results do for a greenkeeper. If it hadn't been for the enthusiastic comment of loyal players I'd probably have given up and the condition of the Crestmoor course would have reverted to a mowed pasture.

With the improvement in the course the directors started to plan on getting new members and stir up golf interest. The dues were \$37.50 per family per year. Salaries weren't very high in this territory.

Two Jobs in Wartime

Then along came the war. Everything shut down at the club in the winter. So I went to work in the railroad shops and continued to live at the club. After 4 P.M. when I got through work at the shop I came out to the course and worked in keeping it in shape.

My only helper was my 9-year-old son. I taught him to water the greens and mow the fairways which he did while I was at work. He was so short his feet barely reached the tractor pedals. But he liked the work, in fact he showed his grand-dad's lively interest and aptitude for the

job and he did mighty well at it for a little fellow.

We went through a whole season that way. Next spring things started to pick up. The course looked fine. The greens showed the benefits of the many hours I'd spent on them.

About this time one of the directors proposed reorganizing the club, reducing the annual dues to \$10 per person or \$20 a family. He had the right idea.

Good Course Brings Members

In 1945 we had about 450 members on this 9-hole course. In 1946 our membership was 685. The course was crowded some days from dawn until nightfall. I thought I'd worked before but from 1945 on all the energy and time my son and I could possibly devote to the job was needed—and then some.

Many of our new members never had played golf but they really got bitten by the bug. How the turf flew! But we gritted our teeth and worked all the harder repairing the damage for I knew this activity would make the club and me.

The club prospered. People were spending money more freely and learning that golf on a well-kept course is an economical pleasure.

Buys New Equipment

Then I sold our directors on the idea of getting new equipment while we could afford it. We got a new tractor, new mowers and a sprayer for greens and fairways. We applied 2, 4-D and our fairways are weed-free and with a fine stand of grass.

Our greens are precision turf. Joe Kirkwood played a very well attended exhibition at our course recently and praised our greens as the truest he'd ever putted on. That might be a bit of poetic license on Joe's part, although we all thank him for it, and I honestly believe no greens I've seen are any truer than ours.

There is a fine cushion subsoil now on the greens. We're going to have to remodel and modernize some of them to make them architecturally O.K. but as putting surfaces they are excellent now.

This year we have more than 500 members of whom 400 are playing members. They talk about this course so it has a fine reputation in this part of Iowa and is definitely a community recreation and advertising asset. And naturally I am quite pleased with what hard work in course maintenance has done for the community. I still manage the clubhouse and am in charge of all buying and selling of golf equipment.

Watch Donald's Career

My son Donald continues to spend eve-

nings after school, his summer and other holidays in course maintenance work. He's carried a greenkeeper's card for three years; one which was given him by the Iowa Greenkeepers Assn. in recognition of his work for so young a boy. Now with Bill Keating, Donald and myself, we've got three generations of greenkeepers in our family. Some day Donald will be one of the very best in the business and they'll be bidding high for his services.

My brother greenkeepers in their association work and with their short courses have helped me immeasurably, and with me, my club. When I left Bill and went on my own I had the theory that hard work, reading and listening to other's ideas and not being afraid to try them, would pay off for me and for the club I served. The theory has paid out. O. J. Noer's articles in GOLFDOM have helped me particularly.

Well maybe we haven't one of the world's finest courses, but we've got at Crestmoor one on which the turf is very good, the standard of maintenance comes as near as possible on our budget to the metropolitan grade, and what we do have in good golfing conditions at low prices can't be beaten many places.

There are hundreds of small towns where the Crestmoor story should be repeated for the good of the game, and getting greenkeepers to do that job is one of golf's big jobs.

CALIFORNIA PROS FILM STATE OPEN IN COLOR

California PGA is pioneering the filming in color of outstanding golf tournaments in the state.

As the first step in such an annual program, the 1947 California State Open held at the Fort Washington CC, Fresno, May 1-4, was filmed in color from start to finish and within a matter of weeks will be exhibited before golf club audiences throughout the state.

The entire idea of golf film in color for exhibition solely through PGA pros in this state was initiated by George Lake, Recreation Park golf courses, Long Beach, and Eddie Duino, San Jose CC, presidents respectively of the southern and northern sections of the California PGA, with Joe McDonald, public relations counsel.

Waldo Glover and Associates, 1930 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, motion picture producers, were sold the idea of filming the State Open on a co-operative basis, with the idea in mind that if this first golf film proved successful a more permanent and sounder financing plan and production schedule could be entered into for filming future golf classics in the state.

The motion picture producers agreed to make the film for a minimum cost payment of \$400.00 plus a percentage of the bookings over and above this sum. To raise the \$400.00 Duino and Lake each secured 20 pros in their respective regions to agree to rent the film for exhibition at their clubs for a fee of \$10.00 per night. With the 20 pros from each section signed up, Lake and Duino advanced their personal checks of \$200.00 each and the deal was completed. Their money will be returned to them via their PGA treasuries as each individual pro pays the \$10.00 rental fee agreed upon.

The nominal fee of \$10.00 per pro per exhibition of the movie was decided upon inasmuch as the promotion is strictly a non-profit one for the PGA units here. The main idea is to have golf films available for the pros. Both Lake and Duino state their pros are crying for good, current golf motion pictures to be shown to their club members and that this is their first official step to try and satisfy that need.

The State Open and future California tournament films are expected to be very popular throughout the state as most all of the California pros and amateurs will be shown in action, along with the highlights of the winning players' games, from tee to green. The film is 16 millimeter and runs about 18 minutes.

Lake and Duino emphasized that the film cannot be shown or booked except through PGA members in California and will not be available for showings outside this state until all California-pro bookings have been completed.

An arrangement has also been made by McDonald for the telecasting of this and future PGA-sponsored golf films by television over the Los Angeles television station of the Don Lee-Mutual Broadcasting System.

R & A MAKES AMATEUR STATUS RULING

Royal and Ancient Club of St. Andrews for first time has issued positive definition of amateur status.

Main difference from previous understanding is one that professionalizes golfers who take part in competitions for purpose of furthering their employers' business interests whether or not such interests pertain to golf. USGA has the same sort of rule. R & A rule allows amateur status to those who have been apprentices to pros and caddies up to the age of 21. The USGA denies amateur status to anyone who, subsequent to his 18th birthday, is a pro, caddie, caddie-master or works in a golf shop.