

Successful Supt. Must Be Human Relations Expert

By FRANK P. DUNLAP

Golf is an old game and has gone through many stages. The game as we know it today did not, however, come into its own until 1902 when a member of the club where I am now employed invented the so-called cord ball.

This ball revolutionized the game of golf and brought forth the modern golf course, with greater yardage and larger greens. The fact that the player could now play to the green from hitherto unheard of distances made larger greens mandatory. However, it did create a new problem. The old blue grass, fescue, or what-have-you putting surface was not satisfactory for the long approach putts that were called for on these greatly enlarged greens. The golfer began to cast about for new and better types of grass, and also for someone who could produce and maintain smoother turf. Thus was born the profession of greenkeeping. Up to this time most anyone who could drive a team or push a lawn mower with a little greater degree of skill than the rest of the crew was the man in charge of the course. These first greenkeepers at once started experimenting with different strains and types of grass. Progress was very slow, for there was no organization and thus no chance for an exchange of ideas and information. On the contrary the situation was quite the reverse. There was much professional jealousy, and many were those who were quite sure they and they alone had solved the mystery of growing a putting surface that just naturally led a ball into the cup. During the years this condition existed, the Lord, the weather, and nature in general conspired to shake their confidence in some of their so-called secrets.

In 1925 some of the old-timers who were more farsighted and a bit more charitable minded gathered at Toledo, Ohio, and out of that meeting came the National Association. The seed was planted and from it grew the modern day golf course superintendent.

The superintendent of today would not exist nor would golf be what it is if it were not for this all important side of superintendent relations—relations to one another.

Progress from Exchange of Ideas

Through these relations and their exchange of ideas, they soon learned that

by giving a little in the form of an idea they were gathering a harvest of worthwhile information that was producing better and better golf courses for the players of this country. From this realization of the value of communal relations came the desire for more technical and scientific approaches to their problems, so they turned to the colleges of agriculture and thus came about the close relationship that now exists between the superintendent and the many universities interested in the growth of turf.

What is the sum total of all of this? It is a quality of turf and a degree of course maintenance that would give those turn-of-the-century golfers and maintenance men much the same feeling as that of the old colored fellow who was taking his children through the zoo—when they came to the giraffe the kids stood in open mouthed wonderment until their father said, "Come away from dar, chilluns, Dar ain't no sich animal."

The present day course superintendent is not a scientist nor is he a farmer in the usual sense of the word, but he does a very highly specialized job of scientific farming. Year by year in addition to this he has been called upon to acquire a working knowledge of a greater and more varied assortment of skills than any professional man I know.

Must Have Many Skills

What are these skills that he must have in addition to his main job of growing turf? First and foremost he must be a mechanic, for today's course is highly mechanized. He must be a tree surgeon, a landscaper, a gardener, a golf course architect, road builder, painter, carpenter, swimming pool authority, tennis court expert, bookkeeper, and labor relations expert. Truly in this last department he must be a magician, for he is expected to keep competent workmen at a rate far below that paid by industry as a whole. The attitude of the club is—if it needs doing turn it over to Joe—he'll find a way to get it done and for less money, too.

Now, while Joe has been acquiring all this knowledge and skill what has happened to him? Primarily he has been so "damned" busy that he has not had time to find out what was happening to himself and what he was getting out of

the deal. He has been so busy looking out for the welfare of others that he has totally neglected his own well being.

The golf course superintendent of today has developed into a full fledged executive and doesn't seem to realize it, and I for one think it is high time he did.

Certainly he is going to have to continue to improve his knowledge of his job, but he is also going to have to spend part of his time letting the public in general and the golfer in particular know just what an important part he plays in the welfare of golf. I say, without fear of contradiction, that the golf course superintendent is the only executive employee of any club that is absolutely indispensable to its continued operation.

Let's take a look at some of the things that a superintendent can do to bring home to the club and people in general just what an important part he plays in their lives.

Unfortunately there are no magic wands to be waved or Aladdin's lamps to be rubbed to bring this about. In the main it will be accomplished by a process commonly called "public relations."

Public relations is, when all is said and done, salesmanship, and in this case the product to be sold is the golf course superintendent.

Selling the Product

To sell any product you must first have a sales organization and that organization must have an advertising department, the duty of which is to get the name of the product before the public. Advertising campaigns cost money and it is a job for experts trained in that field.

We are well prepared to put on a sales campaign. We have the organization in the form of the Golf Course Superintendents Association. It is up to us as stockholders in this organization to provide, through higher dues, the money for it to hire an expert to publicize and advertise our jobs. We also have branch offices in all important cities in the country, the branch offices in this case being our local superintendents associations. The branch office or local association is the point from which the salesman, who calls on the trade, works and in this case the salesman is you.

Now that you are a salesman as well as a golf course superintendent, let us see what it takes to be a good salesman. Primarily he must have a product to sell, and that he has. He must have a thoroughly proven product, and that he also has, as evidenced by the hundreds of fine golf courses in all parts of America.

A good salesman must be industrious and resourceful and always on the lookout for new ideas and new arguments with which he may convince his customer,

in our case the club member, of the value of his product and the need for it. He must evidence an interest in the things that they are interested in—in our case, golf tournaments, tennis matches, swimming events, flower shows, and the like.

He must be helpful to his customer in ways that will call attention to both himself and his knowledge of his job. He must be civic minded and willing to take part in and lend a hand in the conduct of community affairs and endeavors. If he is asked to speak at a garden club he should do so, or if, as in some cases, he is just not able to speak in public, tell them frankly that it is just not in his line, but that he knows a fellow who can and that he will make arrangements for him to be there. This he can do for he is a member of an organization that can provide the man they need.

A good salesman is a thoughtful man, especially where his customers are concerned. If one of them is ill he drops them a friendly card. If one of them takes a step up the ladder of success the good salesman sees to it that he gets a chance to congratulate him. There isn't anything I know of that makes people feel better than to have someone interested in their success. If you make them feel better about themselves, they will by the same token feel better about you, and after all that is the main idea in the first place.

Letters Effective Tools

Letters are one of the most effective tools of the salesman and he strives continually to improve his ability to write good ones. Many business men are more impressed by a good letter than by any other form of sales approach. They very often judge a man's abilities by how well he writes a letter. We as superintendents miss many opportunities to call our club officials' attention to ourselves by our failure to write letters at the proper time.

We should always send a written report to our club as to what we saw and heard that was of interest at conventions and short courses. Suggestions for improvements or alterations to the course should be in letter form. Budgets should always be accompanied by letters of explanation, so also should the yearly summation of expenses.

If any unusual work is to be done, such as construction or renovation that may interfere with play or affect the appearance of the course, a letter explaining the why's and wherefore's should go out to the membership. It will do two things. It will save you a lot of grief from complaints and it will also call their attention to the fact that you are the one who is running their course and you will have

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three swing points are lost. Then, in order to compensate for the loss of head feel, obtained by shortening the club, we would have to add 3/16 ounces.

In making this club $\frac{1}{2}$ inch longer, the pro undoubtedly felt that because his customer was tall, the clubs should be made upright. All well and good, but how much is upright? In knowing the factory terminology he would know that the standard lie on the No. 1 and No. 2 irons is 58 degrees and as we progress we change 1 degree for each club, becoming more upright, of course. The No. 8 and No. 9 irons, as a rule, have the same lie—64 degrees, and the pitching iron and sand iron have the same lie—65 degrees. Now that we know the factory specifications, and also remembering that on a $38\frac{1}{2}$ inch No. 2 iron deflection of $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch is equal to 1 degree, why then it should and would be a simple matter to build the clubs exactly to specifications.

In asking for the irons to be "stepped up a little," we really run into a tough one. Our factory remains constant in our lofts on iron clubs: 17 degrees on the No. 1 iron, 21 degrees on the No. 2 iron, and 4 degrees between each club, right down to the sand iron. At present, the competitive race of the club manufacturers, which is always a good thing, has

led to a little confusion as to the lofts on irons.

Some brands believe that reducing the lofts on the irons will aid in more distance, which is true, and also swing Mr. Average Golfer and the pro into using their particular brand or brands. We remain constant on our lofts at present, choosing to allow the merits of the club to sell itself. Once again, in the final analysis, it is the home pro who will give the factories the answer as to what is the most desirable loft on an iron.

SUCCESSFUL SUPT.

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become more important in their eyes, and again that is exactly what we are trying to accomplish with this sales campaign of letters.

Learn to Speak

Anyone who finds it difficult to talk to groups should take one of the many courses offered in all communities to aid people to more easily and forcefully express themselves. Remember that the members of your committees are business men and will give more consideration to and have more respect for your proposals and suggestions if they are properly voiced, and in respecting the proposal will

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in turn have greater respect and regard for the man who made it.

This salesman superintendent of ours is now taking on the aspects of quite a fellow, so let us not neglect that phase of salesmanship which any successful salesman will tell you is of extreme importance, that is personal appearance. It is not necessary that we become fashion plates, but if we are going to be classed as supervisors we are going to have to look the part. A successful salesman must look successful and a successful superintendent must look like a superintendent. If we are ever going to command the salaries we expect and to which our knowledge and experience entitle us we are definitely going to have to command respect and believe me that will not happen as long as the players on our course cannot identify us from the men who work for us.

All of this adds up to quite a bill of goods and I am quite sure that none of us will ever accomplish all of it, but if we honestly try we are going to be amazed at the results, and we will have contributed our share in helping to elevate our profession. The same relations that have done so much toward gaining recognition for our fine golf courses will again pay

off in gaining personal recognition for ourselves and the profession as a whole.

As an old school teacher of mine used to say, "When building air castles build them high enough so when they fall there will be something to the ruins."

Let's be respectful, but let's also be respected.

SABAYRAC ISSUES NEW CATALOG

Ernie Sabayrac, 7104 Sheridan Rd., Chicago, recently mailed to professionals his new catalog of pro shop apparel and accessories. The catalog, entitled "The Tops for Pro Shops," has a marginal index for ready reference and is loose-leafed to permit future addition of pages devoted to new styles and items. Professionals may have a copy by writing Sabayrac at address above.

About 250 golf course, park, cemetery and highway superintendents were guests of Roseman Tractor Equip. Co., Evanston, Ill., early in May at Chesterfield GC, Niles, Ill. The affair, climaxed with a buffet dinner, featured demonstrations of Roseman gang mowers and Park Challenger mowers, together with Ford tractors and attachments.

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