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# Course Problems Surveyed

## GOLF SEES PROBLEMS AND CONSIDERS ANSWERS

*GOLFDOM* asked practical authorities in course maintenance and pro departments what they regarded as golf's major problems.

Some of the answers are printed in this issue, which, as usual, combines October, November and December *GOLFDOM* into an annual Review and Planning Number. Other comments from successful professionals and golf course superintendents will be printed in January, 1953 *GOLFDOM* and subsequent issues as the large response exceeded space available in any one issue of *GOLFDOM*.

The wage and other management problems and the 1952 maintenance difficulties of the superintendents, and the professionals' recognition of golf promotion responsibilities and business opportunities, not only make the most valuable information men in charge of courses and pro departments could study, but provide required reading for club officials.

The superintendents' frank statements about the labor situation is one of the facts of life that few men in charge of courses would have told their officials a few years ago. Now the situation is so serious that the superintendents must speak bluntly or the standard of U. S. golf course condition will deteriorate rapidly. — Herb Graffis, Editor.

Labor is the most serious problem of golf course operation. The standard of course maintenance, regardless of scientific advances, will be lowered unless wages meet competitive figures of industry.

So believe numerous leading golf course superintendents who have been queried by *GOLFDOM*. The superintendents have had to contend with the labor factor just as club officials have had to meet the labor issue in their plants. The plants have raised wages and given benefits of vacations, sick leaves, retirement plans, insurance, minimum annual wage guarantees and other inducements. The golf clubs, in any location where there is industrial competition for labor, are licked and have had to depend largely on old men or lads during school vacations to do course work.

In some instances, so superintendents told *GOLFDOM*, damage suffered by courses last summer probably could have been prevented had enough competent men been available for emergency work.

The superintendents have tried everything genius can devise as a substitute for money in meeting wage competition for course labor but the substitutes haven't been found acceptable by desirable

workmen. The only saving element has been that some men like outdoor work on courses so much they'll work at it for less than they can get in other jobs.

Frankly, expertly and with foresight the superintendents tell their views of the labor situation and other important factors in the course maintenance picture in the following reports. *GOLFDOM* considers these reports the most valuable assistance club officials and Green committees could have at this time as a sound basis for making policies and programs.

### Modernize Wages and Courses

By JAMES A. REID  
Supt., The Suburban Club of Baltimore County  
Pikesville, Md.

There are many important problems confronting green superintendents but perhaps what is to be considered the most basic problem is the labor situation. Of course one has to go through a process of elimination to get good workers, but it is very difficult when a superintendent does find men who are suited for their jobs, to find that his club will not cooperate by granting adequate remuneration for work well done.

The clubs seem to lose sight of the

fact that a laborer who is willing to work and who has a good job with a good salary will produce more efficiently and with less direct supervision than one who has no real motivation. Golf clubs, on the whole, are far behind the times in the compensation which they give their employees for the fine jobs that they do. Not until they lose their best workers do they realize how little they save by their attitude.

Along the same line, more effective labor production could be achieved by many of the older clubs (broadly speaking, those in existence for more than 20 years) if they were to do some remodeling and building in order to get the most out of their modern equipment. Sharp banks and high mounds that prevent the use of power greens mowers or aerifiers or prevent the trimming of greens and traps with tractor equipment cost the course superintendent much in time and labor spent in caring for them with old-fashioned hand methods. With the elimination of these hazards the men needed to care for them could be freed for odd jobs that otherwise would not be done—getting corners cleaned out, that creek bank mowed, ball marks on the green lifted, or those tee divots cared for.

This past season has been one of the toughest known to golf superintendents. Many have been on the job day and night fighting first the wet spring, then the driest summer in years which produced brownpatch, dollar spot, damping out, grubs and worms.

Of course, the crowning touch is to have some member say that the course is in terrible condition because he has lost a golf match, or maybe a golf ball.

Golf course superintendents are the hardest working group of fellows to be found anywhere, and they are certainly interested in their work. It would help a great deal if committee chairmen and club officials could look in at the association meetings or the national convention and see the interest displayed by the superintendents in not only their own problems, but in the problems of their fellow workers.

## Remodeling Programs Required

By WILLIAM A. BRADY  
Supt., Maple Bluff Country Club  
Madison, Wis.

One of the problems confronting future-thinking superintendents is the economical remodeling and reconstruction necessary to fit the modern golfer. Golf courses all over the country are going to be faced with the need for longer holes.

Top-notch golf pros in the last decade have been teaching classes of teen-agers, interesting increasing numbers in the

game itself. Golf has become more important in school athletics, competitive and recreational. Also, increased leisure time and shorter working hours have increased the number of players on both public and private golf courses.

These factors have produced, and will produce, better average golfers. The score card for the most active golfer is no longer in the 90's but in the 80's and he drives a consistently longer ball, making golf on many courses more of a pitch-and-putt game.

This will necessitate longer holes for golf courses that were constructed in past years. The problem is not always that there is insufficient acreage to change the situation, but that the remodeling is going to need at least a three-year program, keeping in mind both economy and the golfer's right to have a well-groomed course at all times.

Another problem facing superintendents in the Madison and Milwaukee areas is that we can't get the proper sand for our compost. None of the local sand and gravel companies think it worthwhile to invest in screens to give us what we want, and the source of proper sand is so far away that the freight and hauling charges are prohibitive. As it reaches our sidings we would have to pay in excess of \$12 per ton plus hauling charges from siding to golf course. So far, we have not been able to work out a solution to this local problem.

## Big "Headache" Is Labor

By TREVOR E. JONES  
Supt., The Country Club of Fairfield  
Fairfield, Conn.

Many of the superintendents' headaches are minimized today by the wonderful work being done by experimental stations, the universities and colleges doing turf research, and the hard work of Fred Grau, Dr. DeFrance, and others like them. Our "tough nut" is labor; how to get help and keep it under the conditions that prevail in this area.

Bridgeport is a booming industrial city where anyone who can crawl to a time clock can double the weekly wage a golf club can afford to pay.

The days when a strong back was a requisite for a golf course worker are gone. The mowing is done by expensive precision machinery that must be operated by a person with at least average intelligence. Power machines can cause much damage, if not used correctly, to the machine itself, the operator or the green, which is the focal point of any golf course.

Men we wouldn't accept for employment on the golf course invariably find work in local factories and get paid more