

# Dickinson Stages Course Management Conference

**P**ROF. LAWRENCE S. DICKINSON who started the first college course in greenskeeping 25 years ago again pioneered at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, conference March 12 and 13. The conference was held at the conclusion of the ten weeks specialized course for golf course supts. which was attended by 11 from various parts of the U. S. who received their certificates.

There were 116 at the two-day conference which was an unique and definitely valuable affair. It was a true conference according to the dictionary: "interchange of views." There was not a single paper read, no specializing experts lectured, and the supts. did all the brain work and talking themselves.

Results of this conference will have a far-reaching influence in golf as its proceedings are to be edited and published and club officials and other superintendents will get helpful close-ups on the informed and frank observations and judgments of men who can accurately appraise the situation in golf course maintenance.

Dickinson is convinced that the standard of management ability among supts. is not being adequately recognized or utilized. In this conference he put his conviction to the test by presenting a suggested outline of the course management problem today to those at the conference, then walked out and let the fellows handle the job by themselves.

The suggested discussion guide was presented under the title of "Golf Maintenance Seminar." Seminar is the college term for "a group of (usually graduate) students engaged in original research; also the course of study."

## Outline of Conference

The guide sheet read in part:

*The object of this seminar is to have the superintendents discuss the situation and present to their various clubs necessary suggestions to alleviate the present emergency for the good of the club, the game of golf, the golfing areas, and the profession and business of production of fine golfing conditions. Such an expression will, if seriously made, convey to the club officials that the superin-*

*tendent realizes the seriousness of the situation and is not afraid to so inform the club officials together with definite suggestions based upon intimate knowledge of local conditions and of fine turf growing.*

*It is proposed to have the results of the seminar sent to every club president and green chairman in New England and to all other clubs represented at this seminar and a copy to each superintendent present. All names will be omitted from the findings.*

## For General Discussion

### Order of Procedure

1. Outline the seminar plan.
2. Opening of general discussion.
3. Dividing of members into various interests and adjournment for specialized discussion.

*Group I. Superintendents in charge of large courses in Metropolitan areas.*

*Group II. Superintendents in charge of small courses and summer courses.*

*Group III. Owners of golf courses.*

*Group IV. Superintendents in charge of Municipal Courses.*

4. All groups are to stay in session until 12:30. A chairman will be appointed to lead each group, but can be changed any time by group. A note-taker will be furnished for groups I and II.

5. Each chairman will designate at least three, preferably five, to act as an editing committee of the notes taken. Each editor and chairman will receive a copy of the "raw notes" mailed to him during the week of March 23 or earlier.

6. Complete findings should be ready for distribution not later than April 17.

7. Each chairman will furnish a brief report to the entire seminar group following the graduation of the Winter School for Fine Turf Growers.

*I All golf clubs have labor shortages. Why?*

*A. Is it because of poor quality of labor?*

1. Will higher wages improve quality of labor?

Notes:

(a) 20% wage increase. No budget increase.

Available hours reduced 16 2/3%.

For equal labor hours budget must be increased 20%.

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## Course Management

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(b) 20% increase in number of laborers. Rate as at present.

Available labor hours increased 20%.  
Budget increase necessary 44%.

(c) 20% increase in wages and 20% increase in laborers.

Available labor hours increased 20%  
Budget increase necessary 20%.

B. Is year round employment the answer?

1. Number of summer laborers 4 plus 1 full-year man;

How much must budget be increased to have

(a) Two full-year men plus 3 for 30 weeks. Approximately 13%.

(b) Three full-year men plus 2 for 30 weeks. Approximately 30%.

If wages are increased 20%, then 38% and 50% respectively.

C. Will the addition of equipment solve the problem?

1. How many labor hours actually saved?

2. How many labor hours will cost and up-keep of additional equipment buy each year?

3. Will additional equipment increase routine maintenance?

4. Will cultural (not player) conditions be improved?

D. Golf course labor wages increased in last 10 years?

Golf club dues increased in last 10 years?  
Percentage of dues to maintenance in 1943?  
In 1953?

E. Will reducing or ceasing entirely certain practices help the labor problem?

Increase or decrease cultural condition?

F. What is the basic factor that creates pleasurable golf?

Club house?

Golf course?

II. Present Player Demands vs. Sound Golf Course Cultural Practices. How do player demands effect maintenance?

A. The continuing of practices which weaken the grass plant to its limit of tolerance.

1. Change of vegetative growth. Grass variety and weeds?

(a) Often has necessitated complete renovation.

(b) Possible increase of labor hours and material costs which will become permanent.

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B. The installation of watering systems for fairways.

1. Cumulative effect on vegetation?
2. Added fertilizer requirement.
3. Increase in labor hour requirement.
4. Increase in cost of water.

C. Increased demand for no workman interference with play.

1. Unnatural labor hours.
  - (a) Effect on man efficiency.
  - (b) Effect on operation technique.
2. Increase in necessary unproductive labor hours.

D. Increase of machinery and materials to maintain desirable turf.

Questions:

1. Do your green committees and club members realize these increased costs?

2. Have you informed them of the increased costs?
3. How do you expect to maintain at your 1951 or 1952 standards?
4. Are these costly demands from any one group of players? The majority or a minority?
5. Will there be fewer golfers if present demands are not met, but general turf conditions improved?

III. The Superintendent—The Golf Club—and the Profession. Why bring up the subject? Because

A. The greenkeeper or superintendent holds a position which continues to be underrated by club members.

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B. The position is similar to that of a superintendent in charge of production or plant superintendent in manufacturing.

1. Size of the golf course or swankiness of the club does not alter the fact.

2. Is the position being filled above the actual production level?

(a) Is chairman-superintendent relation above employer-laborer level?

C. Do superintendents assume their true position by writing reports, keeping records and accounts of production costs? By warning of possible plant failure if demand is above capacity? By notifying club officials of probable added necessary costs if some "new idea" is adopted? By assuming the role of general practitioner to sick turf? etc.

Dickinson says that the superintendents left the conference noticeably encouraged and with specific ideas of what to do in setting forth their respective problems and possible solutions to chairmen and other officials in a way to be of positive

and quick benefit to their clubs. He adds that especially promising was the way in which the fellows at all types of clubs from the largest and richest to the smallest club having a greenkeeper and helper showed initiative, resourcefulness and a businesslike attitude toward the clubs' overall problem as well as the particular needs of each course.

Since Geoffrey Cornish resigned from the university faculty last September and no replacement was made to aid Dickinson he'd had a tough job in trying to preserve the school's reputation and value in golf course maintenance. Some varsity courses have been dropped but results of this year's conference plainly indicate that Dick lone-handed is continuing to do a job of remarkable profit to golf clubs of Massachusetts and other states.

He was presented at the annual banquet with sentimental and substantial tributes from many in golf maintenance to whom his help has been of inestimable value.

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