

Chairman Sees Need of Course Priority in Club Operations

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(At GCSA convention)

THE progress superintendents have made in the last 20 years has resulted in making fine greens the rule rather than the exception. Today we are so accustomed to good greens that we are apt to accept them as a matter of course and forget the struggles that resulted in their attainment and their continued excellence.

Every time I attend a great golf tournament, the first thing I do is to look at the greens. The public looks at the players. Little do they know what part the green superintendent has played through the years in preparing the course for the tournament. I have a feeling that the green superintendent is the unsung hero of the big tournaments.

We are beginning to accept good greens, even in this troublesome mid-America section, unmindful of the eternal vigilance exercised by the local superintendents. Here is sort of no man's land of turf maintenance, in so far as green problems are concerned.

St. Louis is an outstanding example of what can be done with genuine co-operation. When I first undertook to serve as green chairman, few of the greens adequately survived the late summer and early fall.

We had no green superintendents' association and little desire on the part of our greenkeepers — they were not superintendents then — to participate in such an association. None had the answer to the problems, but by some strange quirk of imagination most of them seemed to think that they had some secret weapon or knowledge which they were unwilling to disclose.

Finally, however, primarily due to the efforts of Leo Bauman of Westwood, who pioneered in close affiliation with the USGA, with some minor assistance from myself and others, a local organization was started and thereupon co-operation supplanted isolation.

A strong organization followed and in spite of the same multiplicity of prob-

lems, all our greens generally survive the rigors of our summers and make us proud of our local green superintendents' association — an example of what we can do for one another.

No green superintendent, any more than a nation, can survive or improve by practicing isolationism. We must co-operate. Emerson's law of compensation tells us that whatever blesses one blesses all. No one is impoverished by giving ideas and co-operation.

Balance of Costs

We hear on all sides about the ever increasing cost of club membership, and playing golf. No one can dispute the fact. Ten years ago the average dues and assessments in this district among representative clubs was about \$150 a year. Today it is about \$350 or more. The average green budget was about \$18,000, today it is about \$40,000.

Of the dues and assessments spent on our golf course, \$80,000.00 is spent in the clubhouse. We maintain a restaurant and facilities capable of accommodating 250 persons with a daily average patronage of less than 40. We maintain facilities for dances, card parties and diverse other social activities utilized by 35 per cent of the membership, but paid for by 65 per cent of the members, and yet we refer to the high cost of golf.

So far as costs are concerned, the golf course has been subordinated to the country club, and from my point of view, the tail is wagging the dog.

I am not contending for the elimination of the social aspects of golf clubs, although I feel somewhat like Abe Lincoln when he was invited to a symphony concert. Abe was somewhat of a backwoodsman rather than an artist, but he attended the concert and after it was over a friend asked him how he liked it. His diplomatic answer was, "For people who like that sort of thing it's just the sort of thing they'd like."

Now of course in your position, it would be indelicate for you to do or say any-

thing about this situation, but your green chairman and his committee can. Your green chairman and his committee should have the point of view of the golfer and not the diner or the dancer and keep expenditures in their proper category.

When periodical recessions hit us and the need to economize arises, your green chairman should remember that the majority of members retain their membership because of golf, and when budgets are sliced let him see to it that the golf budget is the last and not the first to be reduced.

Of course, we who are interested in golf and the preservation of our courses, must be dollar conscious and practice rigid economy. But my experience convinces me that true economy does not mean the abandonment of the essentials of preservation. False economy is expensive, and therefore extravagant.

I should like to see a departure from the present character of golf clubs. There are thousands upon thousands of people who would like to play golf and enjoy the companionships of a private club which they do not get in equal measure from the public courses, but are denied the privilege because of the initial cost and recurring expense. I would like to see golf clubs constructed with only a locker room and a snack bar. Of course, the cost of building the golf course would be no different, but club facilities and therefore initial cost of membership would be substantially reduced and I am convinced that such a club could be operated on half the dues now required.

Cooperation with Architects

The green chairman can also encourage a closer association between the green superintendent and golf architects. A green can be attractive architecturally and still lend itself to easy and efficient maintenance. A golf green is a short time in building, but it is a long time in maintenance, and while the architect may feel that he knows the problem, he cannot know it unless he is in constant touch with the upkeep.

The green committee will also in my opinion do a service to golf by discouraging too many championship courses, where support is expected to come from businessmen. We must remember that 70 percent of the members are high handicap players, and you are not contributing to their enjoyment when you require them to shoot 120 instead of 100.

Maybe I have stuck my neck out, but

these are a few honest observations, not the brand of honesty that McTavish exhibited when he would never again play with McPherson, "That dishonest s.o.b. who claimed he found his ball off the green in the ruff, when it was in my pocket."

You doubtless have observed that I have said nothing about the fairways in this district. That is where silence is golden. Our Chamber of Commerce used to dispute the idle rumor that St. Louis has terrible summers, but of late years they have adopted the expedient of recommending, when weather enters the conversation, of changing the subject.

I have fought poa annua year after year. I have burned crab and silver crab by the acre in an effort to obtain bent fairways. I have seen yarrow tried as a substitute for grass. I have seeded to Merion. I have fallen back on Bermuda and when I contemplate results, the lines of the poet Thomas Moore have come to mind:

Oh ever thus from Childhood's hour,
I've seen my fondest hopes decay.

But I am convinced that with all the work being done on grasses, sooner or later we will have the answer. However, we must not be content with Bermuda or zoysia, although it may be a satisfactory choice of evils for the present. The aesthetic aspect of golf is not pleased with a dead grass eight months of the year, and I have yet to see a permanent marriage between those summer grasses and the winter ones.

Seek New Turfgrass Varieties On Kansas State Test Plots

Height of mowing trials on turfgrass plots at Kansas State College, Manhattan, are being interrupted after five years of work, in favor of new phases of research, report William F. Pickett and Ray A. Keen of the K-State department of horticulture.

In the tests best mowing height for Bluegrass was found to be 1½ to 3 inches. Bermudagrass and Zoysias are best when mowed less than 1 inch high. Research showed that mowing should be frequent and regular—at least once or twice a week.

Pickett said no turfgrasses tested in the variety trials have proved highly satisfactory for this area, and directors of the Central Plains Turfgrass Foundation