

# To Keep Golfers Happy Is Growing Problem

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IT is always good to go back a bit in history in order to get a little perspective. We need this perspective especially when we compare the old-time golf courses with our present-day installations. The other night a comedian passed a remark on television which struck me rather forcibly. He said "History repeats itself — but every time it does the cost goes up." Well, you can say that about the annual cost of upkeep of golf courses. A half century ago, golf courses were not expensive affairs. Today, in the County of Los Angeles, the average annual cost for the upkeep of an 18-hole course is \$70,100.

Actually, what has happened? Our golf courses have become beautiful parks and our members want their courses to be kept in the "finest shape." Every club member has tremendous pride in his golf course, particularly when he is entertaining guests, and he will not be happy unless he is proud of his course and its condition.

In order to accomplish this and keep the golfer happy, all clubs are faced with a continuous increase in the cost of maintaining their courses in a proper manner. I do not have to point out to you what has happened to the cost of labor, materials and equipment during the past 15 years. Labor alone has gone up several hundred per cent in most areas. When you realize that 76 percent of your maintenance cost is labor, you can readily see that, as the labor cost goes up, the cost of maintenance of your golf course will of necessity go up. From the present look of things, one can only conclude that we are going to have increased cost of labor and materials for many years to come.

Other items have gone up too, such as taxes, overhead, equipment and materials. The clubhouse maintenance, and practically every department of your own country club, has been faced with a similar increased cost. Actual membership dues have not gone up nearly in proportion to the increased cost of running a country club.

For some reason, clubs have been very reluctant to increase their dues. This, in short, means that we must continually do a better job if we are to meet the requirement of our members to have better golf courses in spite of continuous increase in costs. As you are required to pay more for labor, you should be able to obtain more competent men who are capable of doing more work provided they are properly supervised. You cannot afford to run poor, obsolete equipment. Breakdowns are too costly because you do not any longer have cheap labor standing by.

## Minimize Manual Work

For the same reason, you cannot afford to do anything by hand that can be mechanized. There are many things that can be done and will have to be done in order to keep the cost of the maintenance of the golf course under control and still have your course in fine shape. Certain parts of your operation, I am sure, may fare better if you contract them out, such as your tree program and other special work. For example, if you have several new tees you want to build, you may be better off by not using your men to do it in the obsolete, old-fashioned way. Perhaps it would be wiser for you to bring in special equipment, in order not to disrupt the routine and supervision of your own men. The special equipment will save a lot of hand labor; and the compaction of soil will likewise give you a saving of labor over the old-fashioned method of waiting for nature to settle the soil.

It can quickly be seen that, as the cost of maintenance of your golf course goes up, the golf course superintendent becomes a more important man, for he is in a position to save his club a lot of money. The course maintenance department is no longer small business. This department can no longer afford the luxury of having a theoretical chairman. It should have a competent business man, not merely a person who has a "green thumb" and is

spending the club's money as his outlet. Let him use his own yard if he wishes to experiment. No club member ought to be regarded as an expert agronomist. If the club possesses any such genius, it might be better to take him off the committee; for he will undoubtedly cost the club a lot of money and, in all probability, he will do irreparable damage to the course.

Modern technical progress is indeed rapid. It is almost impossible to keep up with it. New chemicals, new machines and new grasses are introduced one after another, so that even the expert is lost. I think it is a wise rule not to permit your golf course to be used as an experimental station. Let the colleges and regular experimental stations test out these products first!

Superintendents should not be criticized for not using every new product. I do not mean they should not give new products a chance but, in using them, they should be conservative and conduct their experiments in a proving ground maintained specifically for this purpose.

Your golf associations should do everything they can through the exchange of information and should always stand ready to help all their member clubs in the correct maintenance of their courses.

So, my first conclusion is that in order to keep the golfer happy, you must have an adequate, beautiful golf course in the finest shape possible — and this must be done at the least possible cost. This can best be accomplished by recognizing that superintendents are handling big business and, as such, must be properly compensated and properly qualified. Once having a qualified superintendent, the golf club should cooperate by giving him proper equipment, adequate supplies, and good men so he may do his job well.

The next suggestion, which I know will make golfers happy, is to bend every effort to make your golf course comfortable and human. Why not allow the average golfer at your club to break 90? He pays 90 percent of the bills of your club. Golf courses are like women, you want them to be beautiful, interesting and exciting. But you don't want them to drive you mad. Why are we always trying to have our golf courses "out tough" the other fellow's? These courses are not used day after day to test champions. Have championship tees, if you please, to test champions when champions are playing, but use tees for your members and for your member-guest and invitation tournaments that the average golfer can enjoy. This

will speed up play and lower your maintenance cost.

#### Consider the Average Golfer

So, my second conclusion is to make the majority of your golfing members happier by making your golf course easier and more fun for the average player, and maybe even a wee bit sportier for the top-flight experts. Make your course fascinating with out frustrating!

Efficient handicapping is a most important function. Here is a subject that needs the attention of the golf clubs, golf associations and golf course superintendents; for the golfer will never be happy if the competitive spirit of the game is not always present; he must have an even chance to win. This adds stimulus, spirit and enjoyment to the sport.

It would be to the everlasting advantage of each superintendent to understand handicapping so he could work effectively with club handicap committees and even guide them, if necessary. He should see to it that permanent tee markers are installed to indicate the yardage printed on the score card, from that point on the tee, to the center of the green. And, to be sure, the golf course superintendent should collaborate with the handicap committee and green committee in the rotation of tee markers, to maintain as nearly as possible, the same playing difficulty on the course under varying phases of slow and fast conditions in order to maintain equity in handicapping.

Movable tee markers should be rotated forward in cases of inclement weather or bad playing conditions, such as a very wet course. Movable tee markers should be rotated backward if the course is extra dry. The same is true in reference to the placement of the pins on the greens. How many times have you played on your course and found all your pins in difficult positions? If the pins are in difficult positions on some greens, other pins should be in an easy position so that they average out. If your course plays easy on some days and hard on others, your handicaps will not be accurate. It will depend on "happen-chance"; that is, how the course happened to play on your days.

My fourth conclusion is that those associations which have not adopted the USGA handicap system, ought to prepare themselves to do so at once. Not only will uniformity be thereby established, but interstate golfers will enjoy the game better.

In recent years we have all become

conscious of public relations in every field of human activity. Golf clubs, too, should recognize their responsibilities to their communities. In years gone by, there has been a great deal of effort to by-pass this phase of club life. However, the sooner we face up to it, the better. Golf clubs are made up of good citizens, and good citizens will always cooperate intelligently with high schools and universities, especially in their district. We must be willing to permit their teams to play upon our courses with-in reason, and we must accept our proportionate share of tournaments that are designed for the benefit of the community.

Furthermore, we have a distinct obligation to cooperate with the Civil Defense Administration by making our open golf courses available in an emergency.

Newspapers are important factors in the promotion of good will; and I know of no way to make a club member happier than to have his club, or his own individual name, mentioned in the newspaper.

We also have an obligation to do everything in our power to encourage additional public and private golf courses. Most communities do not have sufficient golf courses. With the increased urbanization of our populations, the golf course becomes a necessity.

I would like to urge the golf associations and the clubs to bring pressure on their city and county governments to establish additional public courses. We should endeavor, as citizens of the greatest Democracy on earth, to champion a program that will help make golf a game for the many — and not for the privileged few.

One of the crowning glories of our great industrial centers is our golf courses. As the populations of our cities increase, these courses play an ever-increasingly important role in health. Their wide open spaces, their air of tranquility give something of great value to the neighborhoods in which they are located.

They say a man who uses only his hands is a "laborer" — one who uses his hands and his head is a "craftsman" — but the person who can use both his hands and his head and his heart is an "artist"! Well, we always stand in need of true artists. Art is an important part of life. As superintendents, we ask you to give us golfers an ever beautiful, interesting, and fascinating experience when we play your course.

You fellows must combine with your skill the soul of an artist. I sincerely mean this. There's an old saying that a deep relationship exists between soil and soul.

## Writers Cite George S. May For Contribution to Golf

George S. May, who is rumored to have vast stores of gold buried under the bunkers at his Tam O'Shanter CC in Niles, Ill., has been named as the man who made the greatest contribution to golf in 1955 by the Golf Writers Assn. of America.

May received 419 points to win the accolade by a comfortable margin over Francis Quimet of Boston, who polled 358 points. Voting was on a 5-4-3-2-1 basis for first, second, third, fourth and fifth. May, who has been sponsoring the world's most lucrative series of golf tournaments for the last 15 years, got 52 first place votes.

### 36 Favor Quimet

The Golf Writers gave Quimet, winner of the National Open in 1913 and the man who is credited with giving golf its first real impetus in the U.S., 36 first place votes. Third place winner was Jack Fleck of Davenport, Ia., who edged Ben Hogan for the Open title in a playoff last June. His 321 total included 23 first place votes.

Women golfers came in for recognition when Patty Berg of St. Andrews, Ill. and winner of four major proette tournaments in 1955, polled 299 points and 22 firsts for fourth place. Several months ago, Patty was selected woman athlete of the year for '55. Fifth place went to Harvie Ward, the amateur champion, who collected 245 points.

### Pays Out \$1,100,000

Since the inauguration of his All American Open and World Championship tournaments in 1941, May has doled out more than \$1,100,000 to the pros and their female counterparts. Another \$146,000 awaits the top winners in this year's Tam O'Shanter events. May will receive a year's possession of the William D. Richardson trophy and a permanent plaque in recognition of his selection by the Golf Writers.

Others selected for their contributions to the game include: Clint Russell, blind golf founder, 234; John Jay Hopkins, International Golf Assn., 227; Joseph C. Dey, USGA executive director, 201; and Clifford Roberts, Masters tournament chairman, 189.

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