

Two Views Presented

Discuss Superintendent's Value to Club and Salary Level

THE supt's value to the club that employs him obviously is open to a great deal of debate since there is an extremely wide range in salaries paid to greenmasters at different clubs and in different parts of the country.

Nobody yet has come forward with any master formula for determining the supt's worth and, consequently, there are no well defined salary brackets established for him. Little effort has been made to establish his annual wage in light of the club's investment, or for that matter, income or operating budget. Apparently not much account has been taken of salaries paid to persons in other businesses and industries who have duties and responsibilities similar to those of the supt. There are those who will say that a strong sectional factor is evident in what is paid the supt., yet this argument can be debunked by pointing to the fact that there is a wide range in supt's salaries within the regions where they work.

In general, it is agreed that salaries of golf course supts. are too low. Green chmn. and committees, who are closer to the situation than any other club officials, recognize this and, in many cases, have taken steps to correct it. Others realizing that more should be done in the supt's behalf, have tried to do what they can to increase his salary level only to meet opposition from their clubs. A third group, however, has set back and done little or nothing.

Shortage of Young Men

Golf, whether or not everyone concerned realizes it, is faced with a shortage of competent supts. The situation may not be alarming at the moment, probably because there still is on hand a large group of older, experienced men to supervise the maintenance of courses. But even within this

group there is a certain amount of restlessness as is evidenced by the number of older men who are either getting out of the business after many years or making rather frequent job changes. What will hurt golf most in the long run, though, is that younger men who are trained and qualified to be course supervisors are passing up these jobs for better opportunities in other industries.

To find out what can or should be done about raising the general supt. salary level, GOLFDOM recently inquired of several green chmn. and supts. what their thoughts on the matter are. For obvious reasons the names of the persons who expressed the typical remarks that appear below are withheld:

As the Green Chairmen Sees It

A green chmn. at an exclusive Southern California club says — I suppose the worth of a supt. depends somewhat on the economic condition of the club. A club with rich members can afford to throw money around and pay high wages — although this doesn't always happen. One, where the members may not be quite so well to do, may pay its supt. more. At any rate, supts' salaries in California vary greatly and so I assume that ability or inclination of members to pay stands out as the biggest single factor in determining the worth of the man who keeps the course in shape.

This is not 100 per cent as it should be. Great importance should be attached to the volume of daily play, weather conditions, degree of ease or difficulty in maintaining the course, and, finally, the scope of the supt's job. Also, I certainly don't think the training and competence of the supt. should be overlooked in determining the salary paid him.

As for efficient operation of the course,

I think it would best be served if there was closer relationship between the club's board and the supt. through the green committee. I have served as green chmn. at our club for several years and never yet have seen a real sympathetic attitude on the part of the board toward the supt. The board will approve spending for plush appointments for the clubhouse but hold back in making course improvements. This thinking, as I see it, probably affects the supt. salarywise.

From what I have seen, the supt. and green committeemen usually hit it off quite well. The latter recognize his worth, but the trouble is the committeemen don't go far enough in impressing on the board just how valuable the supt. is. When the green committees start going to bat for men who maintain our courses, then I think you are going to see a general increase in salaries paid to supts.

A green chmn. at a well known Midwest club gives this opinion — Today, most clubs give their supt. practically full rein in turf maintenance programs. Many add the duties of general overseer of all club properties. As long as he does a good job and the club is satisfied with the condition and appearance of the course, etc., the supt. is allowed to remain somewhat in the shadows.

But let these things deteriorate and he soon becomes known to just about everyone as he is called in on the carpet or possibly read out of employment.

Clubs usually are quite precise in defining the supt's duties. They know what they want in the way of a course and how much they are willing to pay for it. Everything in this respect is nicely estimated, checked and totalled.

But there is one thing that is too often overlooked. The budget approvers force the quality of maintenance to fit a predetermined amount of expenditure and you can bet they want the greatest kind of quality for their money. If expenditures for all the materials used in maintaining a course increase in price, it probably will be necessary for the supt. to cut back on his labor costs if he is working under a rigid budget. This may mean that maintenance of greens, tees and fairways isn't kept up to predetermined standards. The members kick, the committee growls, all with the result that the supt. is severely criticized. Under these circumstances, you can be sure that the supt. isn't going to have a very happy financial future so far as he personally is concerned.

Company Tournament Woes

The Newsletter Bulletin, published by the Edison Club, Rexford, N. Y., recently pointed out some of the difficulties in running a company golf tournament. On Memorial Day week end, 200 players took part in the annual tourney. Of these, 187 disqualified themselves for various reasons such as: Scores not turned in; Scores posted on board but cards not turned in; Scorecards not filled in properly; Illegible names on cards; Wrong nines played. At least one person played twice. What should have been a fine tournament turned out to be a contest between 13 persons, seven of whom won prizes.

Where rigid, predetermined budgets that don't allow for increases in material or labor costs after the budgets are drawn up are in force, the supt. operates at a disadvantage. It's humanly impossible for him to meet standards established by a board, membership or committee that is blind to the limitations placed upon him. When the time comes for talking salary for the new year, he is at a disadvantage because he can't point to the course and use it as a bargaining weapon. In these circumstances it is conceivable that he may go on year after year without ever having his salary upgraded. This condition must be corrected.

This is what a Kentucky chmn. has to say — Supts' salaries vary a great deal according to the sections in which they live. Whether they like it or not, I think that is an economic factor that has to be considered. Also, the type of club for which they work is another consideration. In Kentucky, for example, there is a spread of from \$8,000 to \$10,000 between the lowest supt. salary bracket and the highest.

Whether or not this is right, I am not qualified to say. If the experience and expertness of the supts. in the lower salary brackets are sufficient, and if these men are doing good jobs for their clubs, then certainly their wage levels should be raised. I don't know how to advise these men to get more money other than to go to their clubs and present their individual cases, using all the comparative salary figures they can get hold of. In our section of the country a good supt., in my estima-

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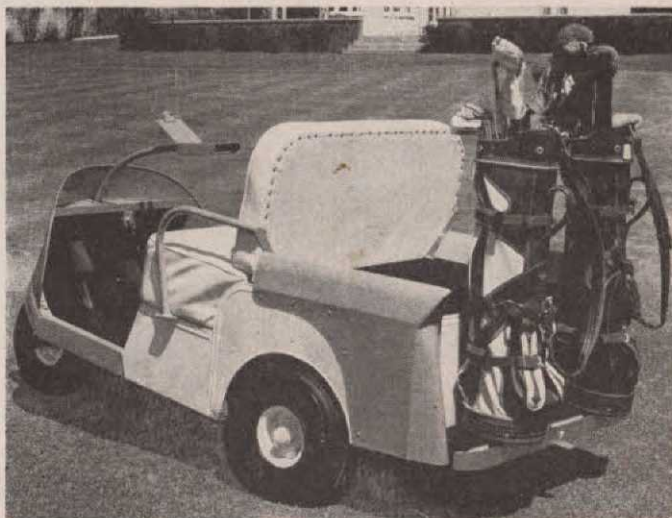
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Discuss Superintendent's Value

(Continued from page 30)

tion, is worth at least, \$7,000 or \$8,000 a year.

What the Superintendent Thinks

A New York supt. observes — I've never seen a supt. who is worth much to his club who is overpaid. That's stating it pretty flatly, but if you ask me to back up these words, let me point out a few things:

To be a supt., a fellow has to be familiar with, if not expert in, soil management, drainage, seed, fertilizer, fungicides, chemistry, mechanics, hydraulics, electricity, plumbing, material and labor costs and labor relations. And it doesn't hurt if he knows something about forecasting weather and accounting. He certainly has to be

a diplomat and if he doesn't have more than the average share of common sense, he isn't going to last long tending a golf course.

If clubs had to employ the full or part time services of specialists in all the skills listed above, just imagine what it would cost.

Salaries paid some supts. who are responsible for investments involving a half million dollars or more are ridiculously low. If a man is asked to oversee and maintain a plant as large and complicated as a country club, surely his annual salary should be commensurate with the responsibility.

This is the opinion of a Virginia supt. — Operation of a modern golf plant calls for skillful management if rising costs are go-

ing to be kept under control. As a result, club officials are paying more attention to the qualifications and accomplishments of their supt. They are beginning to recognize him as something of a scientist as well as a supervisor and a businessman.

Golf, though, is not getting its fair share of graduates from the agronomy schools. Why? Compensation in related fields is higher to begin with and remains higher as the graduate gains more experience and ability. I mentioned earlier that clubs are giving more recognition to the supts. who work for them. This is true, yet the clubs are showing complacency in not making more jobs available to younger men. What's going to happen when the older men retire? For many of them, many more than you think, this is going to come about in the next few years. There is not much young blood in the GCSA. As we may say about the machinery and equipment we use — there are not enough replacement parts.

What is the answer and the remedy? First, make the job worthwhile. Second, don't permit a lot of people to interfere with the work the supt. is trying to do. Third, make the pay envelope adequate for a man to support himself and his family comfortably. If clubs will do these things, they can correct the condition which sees golf steadily losing potentially fine supts. to other fields.

These are the remarks of a Connecticut supt. — The big failing of some, if not all, supts. is their failure to seek or ask for recognition. In our local association there are a few fellows who are reluctant to ask their clubs for expense money to attend turf conferences. Some of these men have even allowed their clubs to deteriorate because of reluctance to ask for the necessary funds to make repairs or improvements.

Supts. ordinarily are saddled with a great deal of responsibility. They may have to look after tennis courts, clubhouse grounds and in many cases, the clubhouses themselves, swimming pools, etc., in addition to maintaining the course. If they do a reasonably conscientious job of keeping all of these things in usable or playable shape, there is no reason why they should be coy about it so far as their members and committees are concerned.

I feel that the supt. should look around and try to find out what people in other industries or businesses earn for taking on a work load comparable to the supt's and

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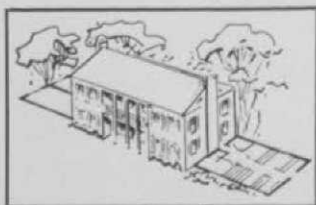
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peg his salary to theirs. Also, I think that the supt. should try to determine if his job requires an equivalent amount of skill, training and experience as these other people and take these things into consideration in matters pertaining to salary.

Above all, I say to other supts., don't be coy. Your members and committees aren't aware of what your job entails simply because you never have brought it to their attention. I've dealt with enough of these people to know that they will treat you fairly in salary and other matters if they are informed as to what you do and what you need.

An Illinois supt. has this to say — Determining what a supt. is worth to his club may depend on what side of the fence you're on. As a supt. I'll say that there are quite a few of us who aren't being overpaid, but at the same time I'll concede there are just as many of us who are doing very little personally to correct this situation.

The truth is, we're strong on some things, weak on others. Most of us are competent turfmen but this does not make the complete supt. We have to be businessmen as well.

The Indoor Job

Take planning and budgeting, for example. How well do we do this? Probably not too capably, because basically we're the outdoor type and these things call for using figures — an indoor job. But if we're going to improve ourselves from the salary standpoint, we're going to have to know how to do all these things. That's what the clubs are paying us for.

Let's take budgeting, for example. We must learn to handle budgets, either annual or long range ones in order to be able to make forecasts of costs so that we and our green committees can show our boards the potential magnitude of the course financing problem. To back up what goes into the budgets calls for keeping adequate daily records that support the forecasts we make.

Budget making, keeping daily records, planning, general administrative work, etc. should complement the work we do in directing the maintenance of course, grounds and clubhouse. Until we are competent in all these things, we won't come near commanding the salaries we may think we are worth.