



## Consider All Costs in Operating Your Golf Car Fleet

- Don't Overlook** • Insurance  
• Interest Charges • Storage and  
Maintenance • Parts Expense  
• Reconditioning Costs

Golf cars have accounted for drastic changes in the club operating picture but so far nobody seems to be sure of the extent and nature of the changes and the adjustments required by the golf car era.

The cars have meant new revenue, new expenses, new problems. They have meant the continuing activity of older golfers whose physical condition might keep them away from the game were they not able to make use of golf cars.

They have supplied a substitute for caddie service on days when boys are in school and because of this have drawn clubhouse and pro shop patronage and green fees where it otherwise wouldn't be realized. Some golfers believe the cars will diminish caddie employment to a marked extent.

The cars have necessitated construction of new bridges and some easing of grades. At some clubs there has been required construction of car paths, either in greens and tees areas only, or in these locations and at sides of fairways, and con-

struction of car garages. The cars have required wide revision of course maintenance practices.

### Regulation and Education

They have called for regulations governing their use; regulations involving member education and control and decisions on suitability of turf for car traffic.

The cars have meant faster play in some cases but delays when a slicing golfer and a hooking companion are using the same vehicle.

They have prompted discussion regarding the advisability of limiting their travel to the sides of fairways, either through the rough or on blacktop or other surfaced roads, or permitting their use anywhere on the basis that normal distribution of the traffic pattern will prevent undue wear and will avoid use of roads that give the course an artificial look and disrupt normal playing conditions.

Cars are owned by individual golfers, by clubs, by pro, by organization leasing them to pros and/or clubs.

Car maintenance is handled by somebody on the club or pro staff, the supt's staff or by the leasing organization.

#### **Rent and Service Charges**

There is no figure that can be regarded as a standard price for two-passenger golf car rental. Rental varies from \$6 to \$10. There also is no standard of monthly service charge but it is estimated that about one third of the clubs providing golf car service charge \$20 a month. The \$20 figure seems to be based on what "other clubs" charge rather than on cost experience and study.

The cars are growing in popularity and for several years have been in golf on a "here to stay" basis, yet definite figures on car operation are rare. There have been tales about car revenue being large enough to equal slot machine income of the old days when the one-armed bandits rather than good business management kept some clubs going. But rumors of huge profits from car operations haven't been confirmed. The cars have been good net producers, not "sensational" earners.

#### **Revenue A Life-Saver**

Car revenue, either on ownership or leased basis, has been a life-saver for pros in producing revenue that helps to meet steep rise in the shop dept. cost of doing business and meeting greater demands of clubs and members for unpaid services.

The mechanical features of the cars — power, tires, balance and safety, design for convenience, etc. — also are one of the subjects of study and discussion in golf business.

In the growing pains of the fast expanding golf car market, club officials, professionals, superintendents, and car makers and lessors are having the problem of learning what the score is on this phase of the golf business.

This year there'll be by conservative estimate) between 34,000 and 36,000 cars operating at U. S. golf courses, most of them at the private golf clubs and semi-private courses. The 14 manufacturers who will make most of this year's output of golf cars will produce 11,000 or more cars in 1960 and sell them for nearly \$9,000,000.

The differences of opinion and figures between, say a professional and a golf car salesman, sometimes are wide but they always are educational.

#### **Pro, Salesman Debate**

Here is a case in which statements of an experienced professional and a successful golf car salesman are given.

**Pro** — I've heard that a professional who has a fleet of golf cars is making more money than he knows what to do with. I agree that money is being made. Let's look at the figures beginning with the cost of a good car. Often a car with six batteries and electric charger for each car) will cost \$1100.

**Car Salesman** — Just a moment! Rarely does a professional spend this much money for a car.

I want the pro to make money for important service and the way for him to make it is to have his costs fully and accurately itemized. I know one pro who thought he was keeping his expenses of car operation correctly but forgot to figure interest charges on money he borrowed to buy the cars. The cars aren't going to be tremendously big and easy money for the pro. If they were going to be in that earning class the clubs would, of course want to share in the profit.

#### **Insurance Protection**

**Pro** — Any professional operating golf cars is making a mistake if he doesn't insure each car for \$100,000 and \$200,000 liability, plus property damage, plus \$50 deductible for damage.

**Car Salesman** — The pro certainly must carry insurance for his protection and that of the customer and club. The insurance charge should be part of the operating cost. There is a PGA deal on such insurance that is cheap: \$18 or \$20 a car. The car user ought to know that the pro has arranged for insurance coverage. Make reference to it in the form that the user signs when he takes out the car. Let me remind you that in many cases the pro — and the club — ought to get good legal advice on their position in the car business. The charge for this advice would go into the operating cost.

**Pro** — With a fleet of cars a pro needs at least one good man to keep the cars in satisfactory operating condition. He has to be kept hired all year although cars are used only seven months a year in our district. That means a minimum salary of \$3,600. During the peak period the man may need a helper. Then someone must be available to handle car reservations, put clubs on cars, take them off, attend to the delivery of the car to the first tee and its return to the storage building after use. He must advise guests regarding routes, make out charges, attend to sending another car out for players' use and bringing back the out-of-order car in case of breakdown, etc.

*(Continued on page 76)*

## Golf Car Operating Costs

(Continued from page 34)

I've got to keep an inventory of parts, some spare tires and rims and an air compressor for tire service and car cleaning. Every winter we do a thorough job of overhauling our cars and restoring them to A-1 condition.

The car is highly valuable and it will add to the pro's income, but it certainly won't yield any of those fantastic net earnings I hear mentioned.

### Salesman's Rebuttal

**Car Salesman**—Let's take your troubles, point by point. One man can take care of all maintenance work on a fleet of 30 cars. On a smaller number maybe it would be better to have the supt. work out a maintenance program, if possible, using the part-time service of his mechanics.

You'd better revise your system about car reservations. This phase should involve no more trouble than handling your lesson calendar.

Putting the bags on the cars and taking them off is a simple job for a caddie. The garage man should be able to handle the supply of a reasonable number of cars to

the first tee and getting them from the 18th green or lockerroom entrance to the garage.

Damages while the car is in use are as much a matter of the user's liability as damages to Hertz, Avis, National or other rental cars and should be covered by insurance. One operator of a leased fleet of golf cars gives the golfer the option of paying 50 cents a round for full coverage insurance or taking the car with the understanding that he will be charged for any damage.

The pro at a private club had better have full coverage insurance cost included in his car charges because the pro seldom is in position to argue about car damage.

Winter overhauling of the golf car is a perfectly normal item of expense to be figured into the charge for use of the car. One of the biggest golf car leasing companies completely refurbishes each car of its fleet once a year (excluding battery replacements) at a nominal cost. Batteries are replaced every two years.

### Annual Fee Basis

The practice of members renting cars on a flat annual fee basis is growing and already is showing increased clubhouse



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Shady Valley Golf Course Professional Shanty Hagan, (left) and Greens Superintendent Dusty Wardlaw, (right) check Nelson-Rain Bird System performance on the Arlington, Texas course.

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and pro shop revenue, particularly for "twilight" 9-hole use.

Seldom are there cases such as that at Tam O'Shanter in Chicago where George S. May owns the club and doesn't mind if a few cars are stuck in the mud and leave "ground under repair" areas, if enough cars get through and produce revenue. At private clubs organized "not for profit" and owned by all members, the majority wouldn't countenance damage to the course by mired cars so the pro really hasn't much of a problem in passing along the "wet grounds" edict forbidding golf car use.

The pro problems with golf cars are nothing that good bookkeeping, member understanding of the rightful cost of first class modern car service, and a few years of experience and education won't solve with profit for all concerned.

## Girls' Junior Championship

The USGA Girls' Junior Championship will be played Aug. 15-19 at The Oaks CC, Tulsa. Entries must be received by the USGA by July 29th. Girl amateurs who haven't reached their 18th birthdays by Aug. 19 and have handicaps not exceeding 36 strokes are eligible to compete.

## GCSA Starts Work on 1961 Educational Program

Education committeemen of the GCSA has held meetings in various cities throughout the country and in Canada drawing up preliminary plans for the program that will be presented at the 1961 national conference which will be held in Toronto, Jan. 29-Feb. 4. The following have been in charge of these meetings: David Moote, Toronto; Art Twombly, James Baird GC, Pleasant Valley, N. Y.; Joe B. Williams, Santa Ana (Calif.) CC; Tom Leonard, River Oaks, Houston; and Roy Nelson, Ravisloe CC, Homewood, Ill. The latter is national chmn. of the committee.

The education committee has been in close touch with all GCSA chapters to determine what is most wanted on the 1961 program. Suggested subjects are being reviewed by the above named men and their sub-committees, each of which will submit a program agenda for final adoption when the national education committee meets shortly before next year's convention. It has been agreed that the education program will be composed of these four sections: Personnel, Management, Technical and Miscellaneous.