
Selling Those Extra-Budget Projects

Assessment conscious members won't erect any monuments to you for suggesting them . . . but that doesn't mean they won't approve them if you can show how the club will benefit

By **ED STEWART**

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If I were a member of a country club committee that was hiring a superintendent, my first inclination wouldn't be to ask the applicants how much they know about turf and how to take care of it. Rather, I think I would say, "How good a salesman are you?" and then base my selection on the answers they gave to this question. I'm not sure that this attitude is 100 per cent in keeping with the policy of many clubs that may lean to the Milquetoast type fellow for their greenmaster, but after working for nearly 10 years as a supt. and four more as an assistant, I'm convinced that the fellows who are successful in our line of work are as much salesmen as they are turf and soil experts.

At most clubs, it isn't too much of a task to get the board to act favorably on the regular or routine budget. Members of the board usually are well enough acquainted with economic conditions to agree to say a five per cent increase over the previous year's budget because the annual cost of living index tells them that labor, material and equipment costs for the coming year will, in all probability, go up that much. You don't always have to be a salesman to sell these rather routine figures unless, of course, other departments in the club are making a spirited pitch for more money, some of which may come out of your annual al-



Ed Stewart

. . . competing against other departments.

lotment. Then you have to get in and outsell them.

Over and Beyond Necessities

But where salesmanship really counts is when you're going after something over and beyond the routine necessities. It may be the addition of or improvement in your irrigation system, the purchase of a piece of equipment, the cost of which may stagger persons who aren't familiar with equipment prices, or similar items. If you think for a moment that board or committee members are going to rally around and pat you on the back for thinking big when you suggest such things, you're going to be disappointed. One or two may appreciate the need, but not the majority. It is this bloc that you have to crack and it may take a year or two or even three to do it.

I'm not offering anything new when I state that the first law of salesmanship

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Oscar Borgmeier, treas., O. J. Noer Turf Research Foundation, presents \$1000 check from Foundation to Dr. L. Engelbert, chmn., soils dept., University of Wisconsin. The money is to be used in financing research into the growth and deficiency symptoms of each of major mineral nutrient elements of turfgrass. Dr. James Love is in charge of this project. At presentation were (l. to r.): James Love, C. G. Wilson, Borgmeier, Engelbert, O. J. Noer and O. O. Clapper, a director of the Noer Foundation.

is selling yourself. All successful supts. that I know have done this. I've been at River Forest for seven years and I have made it a point to become acquainted with as many golfers as possible. I know at least 90 per cent of them at our club. I don't know if this actually constitutes selling myself, but at least when I attend a monthly business meeting, the members don't look blankly at me and wonder who I am. This is a point in my favor.

The logical thing to sell after you have sold yourself is the benefit that will come from the club's buying your suggestion. In the last two years I have been able to persuade our members to make outlays amounting to nearly \$15,000 to improve two greens and several traps and to buy some large pieces of equipment that I knew would greatly ease our maintenance work.

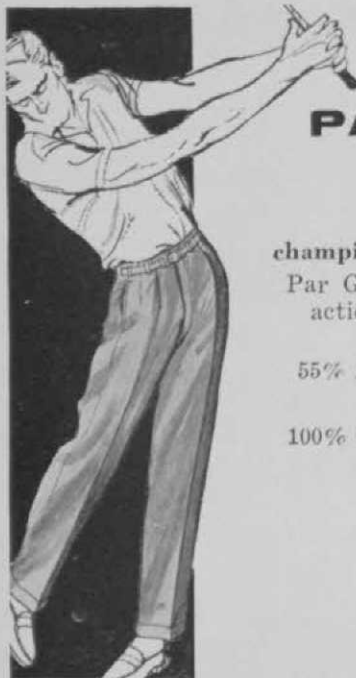
Take Second Look

At the same time, other departments were putting in bids to make capital improvements that would run the total two-year bill to around \$50,000. For the

past decade River Forest has operated on a pay-as-you-go basis by making special assessments rather than assume any long-time mortgages, such as it did in the late '40s. So, it is natural that the members are going to take a second look at proposals for improvements or expensive new equipment before consenting to ante up anything beyond their regular dues to pay for these things. You can be sure they have to be sold before they are going to spend their money.

To put over the course project, I tried to figure down to the last cent just what it would cost to rebuild the greens and traps. But more important, I concentrated on marshalling all the advantages that would come from making the course improvements, jotting them down as they occurred to me. As for the equipment, I didn't go out and get bids from seven or eight suppliers, as is customary, because when you do this and submit the figures, you know in advance what pieces of machinery you are going to get, providing your request is approved. What

(Continued on page 78)



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Extra-Budget Projects

(Continued from page 48)

I did was pick out the mowers, etc., that I wanted, got quotes on them, and then proceeded, with the help of the suppliers, to make a selling case for them. In both instances, when I appeared before the board, I was well prepared to back up my requests with a pretty fair assortment of reasons for making improvements or for purchasing the new equipment.

Planning Committee Helps

I am more fortunate than most supts. in that River Forest has a planning committee made up of past presidents of the club and green committee members who periodically tour the clubhouse and course to determine just what may or may not be needed in the way of improvements. This committee isn't authorized to make any allotments for improvements but its recommendations go a long way with the board. In effect, if the planning group is sold then the club is sold, and it is through this committee that the club mgr., professional and supt. have to make practically all their requests.

River Forest's planning committee isn't an ivory tower organization that only goes through the motions of making plans or reviewing requests. Twice a year — in

the spring and again in the fall — members of this group make a thorough tour of the course and it is then that I have to call their attention to the improvements that I think should be made or the replacement equipment that is needed. They get a firsthand look at our entire maintenance operation and make their decisions only on the basis of what they see. These decisions, incidentally, aren't always in my favor, but my batting average with the committee could be worse than it is.

Softening Them Up

At the present time we are campaigning for a new maintenance shop and storage shed. As I see it, it is going to be at least another year before we have a chance of getting these additions, but at least I'm working to get the committee softened up. Just recently I arranged to take the members to neighboring Butterfield CC, where Bert Rost is installed in a new shop, so they could see how such improvements help to make the maintenance department's job easier. Possibly the resistance of half of the planning committee was broken as the result of that trip. That means we still have to sell the other half.

Breaking down resistance to improvements, incidentally, is as much a part of a supt's selling program as the afore-



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mentioned "selling yourself" or "selling the benefits." It's natural that the first inclination of the members, who may be faced with assessments if they agree to too many expenditures, is to talk you out of any major improvements or large outlays for equipment. You certainly shouldn't resent it when they do because if you were in their place that undoubtedly would be your first inclination.

Nevertheless, if you really want what you're after and are sure that it will help the club, you shouldn't allow key members at least to forget that you're in the market for a new tractor, or a new workshop or whatever it may be. You're not in position, of course, where you can apply very much selling pressure, but that doesn't mean that you can't go on dropping appropriate and constant reminders. It's as one highly regarded supt. in the Chicago dist. told me when I took over at River Forest: "The fellows in this business who are too timid are the ones that usually are job hunting. When they see that a course is becoming rundown because of lack of manpower or machinery or something of that sort, and don't have enough guts or nerve to go to the board and ask that something be done,

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they're easing themselves out of a job. When the blowup finally comes, you can bet that no club official in his right mind is going to take 'I was afraid to ask for it', as an excuse. That's the silliest attitude a supt. can have."

I've been trying to follow that advice since I've been at River Forest.

Nature Cooperates in 1960

(Continued from page 66A)

tion. A good performing creeping bent which can be produced from seed is badly needed. It would be cheap even at \$10.00 a lb. based on the 1 lb. seeding rate recommended for Penncross, as compared to 4 to 5 dollars per bu. for stolons with a planting rate of 7 to 10 bu. per 1000 sq. ft. Seeding is quicker and easier than stolon planting.

Iron chlorosis is on the increase. It has been especially bad on poa. This has been true on fairways as well as greens. Supts. in the Chicago area sprayed poa infested fairways periodically and believe its use has been extremely helpful.

Poa annua was doing badly on some greens on one course in Montreal in Aug. Roots were almost non-existent. Iron chlorosis seemed like the cause but symptoms were not clear cut. It might have

been lead arsenate toxicity. There was leaf spot but disease seemed to be secondary — the result of weakened grass. Two small spots of Velvet bent showed the characteristic chrome yellow color associated with iron chlorosis. Ferrous sulfate was used at 1½ oz. per 1000 sq. ft. with 20 gals. of water per green on a Thursday afternoon. On Friday results were not striking but signs indicated slight improvement. Ferrous sulfate was used again that afternoon at 2 ounces per 1000 sq. ft. By Monday recovery was startling. Even the worst spots where it looked like the grass was gone showed new signs of life. Improvement was remarkable.

Complaints are being made by golfers about failure of new greens to hold the ball. Higher percentages of necessary fibrous organic matter may be needed during the first several years to offset the higher sand content of the surface soil. As the humus undergoes decay, grass will develop the sole of turf needed to provide the necessary slight cushion.

The kind of sand used in topdressing mixtures seems important. Uniformly fine sand is not the answer. A good, sharp sand is better. There are several instances where the switch has been beneficial.