

Finishing School for Students in Turf Management

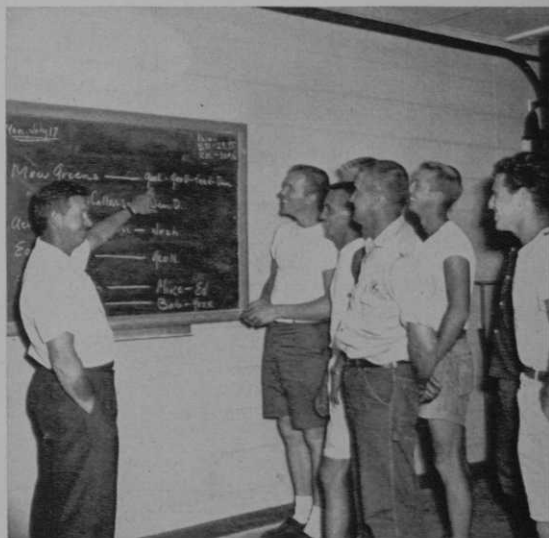
*Eight trainees learn how theory
is put into practice in maintenance
of Bob O'Link Course*

Young Dennis Hallbach, who was raised on a farm near Spencer, Ia. and is a student in turf management at Iowa State University, never had been any closer to a golf course than to see an occasional one from a highway until about two months ago. But prospects are that he is going to develop into an excellent supt.

That, at least, is the prediction made for him by Bob Williams, the greenmaster at Bob O'Link GC in Highland Park, Ill., and a former GCSA national president who, in his 20 years of turf work, has had a chance to size up many a prospective supt.

"Denny," says Williams, "is a hardworking young man with a fine academic background and there's no reason why he shouldn't do well in the golf course field. What is important, he doesn't avoid re-

Comfortable living quarters are provided for four of the Bob O'Link student supts. in the maintenance building. Four others live away from the course.



Supt. Bob Williams (left) outlines day's work plan for Ted Mattson, George Druzisky, Bob Puzin, Fred Opperman and Mike Malloy (l to r). George Niklas and George Leix are in photo but are obscured. Oscar Miles and Dennis Hallbach weren't present when photo was taken. All but Puzin, who is Williams' foreman, are students at Bob O'Link's turf management school.



sponsibility and he has the knack of getting along well with just about everyone."

Williams, who is something of a departure from the traditional mold of supts., feels that the mere growing of turf should not be the sole preoccupation of the greenmaster. As he emphasized in a speech at the GCSA Toronto convention early this year, the supt. should be directing more and more of his energy toward improving his managerial knowhow and learning to get along well with his employers as well as persons who work for him. Young Hallbach, who is learning the practical side of greenkeeping at the Bob O'Link club, apparently is doing a good job of absorbing Williams' ideas about supervising maintenance of a course, or he wouldn't be getting such a solid endorsement.

Eight in Training

The Iowa youth is one of eight college students, majoring in turf management, who have been spending the summer at Williams' finishing school at the Highland Park course. Six of them attend Penn State, either on a two- or four-year basis while the eighth, Mike Malloy of Chicago, is specializing in soil physics at the University of Illinois. The Penn State delegation includes George Nicklas, Butler, Pa.; Oscar Miles, Quincy, Ill.; Ted Mattson, West Middlesex, Pa.; George Druzisky, Baden, Pa.; Fred Opperman, Johnstown, Pa. and George Leix of Pittsburgh.

All of these young men, with the exception of Hallbach, grew up in fairly close association with golf. Three of them were caddies; George Nicklas worked three summers for Earl Kennedy, supt. of the Butler CC; Druzisky was employed as a caddiemaster for one year after putting in a three-year stint as a club carrier; young Mattson lived across the street from a course and worked in a pro shop; and George Leix is the son of the supt. at Shanopin CC in Pittsburgh. Fred Opperman, a Navy veteran, had done a little caddying in his teens, but had drifted away from thoughts of golf until he read a Penn State pamphlet that described the career possibilities offered a supt.

Williams' program at Bob O'Link is a three-phase affair in which almost all emphasis is put on working with equipment and products used in course maintenance, observation of methods used, and supervisory training. It has been developed in the last seven years, five of them at Beverly CC in Chicago where Williams was supt. until moving to his present spot early in 1960. In all, Bob has introduced 30



When day's work is done, the students can sit back and take in such exciting views as these. Bob O'Link is one of the most beautiful courses in the Chicago area.

young men to the practical side of greenkeeping. About 70 per cent of them have remained in golf course work and all in turf work of some kind. More than a handful of Williams' proteges now are supts. at various courses throughout the country and possibly a dozen are working as assistant supts. or foremen. One is a pro-supt.

Prevailing Labor Rate

Each of the young men enrolled in the Bob O'Link training course is paid at the prevailing labor rate. However, both Williams and Bob O'Link officials emphasize that the supt. trainees are not brought in with the idea of providing the club a labor force. It is true that they operate tractors, handle greenmowers, pre-

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Finishing School

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pare and apply fertilizers, herbicides, fungicides and man the hoses, etc., but this mainly is to familiarize them with all the different types of work that have to be done on a course.

Williams, incidentally, points out that too much time doesn't have to be devoted to the technicalities of greenkeeping since the trainees are well grounded in these in their college turf management courses. "What it amounts to," says the Bob O'Link greenmaster, "is that everything these fellows learn in school suddenly makes sense when they see it demonstrated."

The observational phase of the program is, of course, pretty well worked in with the labors that the young men perform. "Learn by doing," is the theme in this respect. One thing incidentally, is constantly stressed by Williams and Bob Puzin, his assistant, who plays an important role in the Bob O'Link program: No job is performed by any trainee without an explanation of why it has to be done. Consistent with this thinking, the full day's program is explained to the young men before they start working in the morning.

All of the trainees take turns serving as

job supervisors. Usually, three of the young men are assigned to work under a fourth for a few days or for even a week, with the supervisory job being rotated among the four. Since Williams and many other members of the GCSA feel that this is the greatest lack in the education of a supt., perhaps more emphasis is put on this part of the Bob O'Link course than any other. Not only are student trainees taught how to give orders and get the most out of the men working under them without incurring resentment or resistance, but they are constantly reminded that a person in a supervisory capacity has to learn to practice self discipline and keep the right attitude and outlook toward his job regardless of the adversity that he may encounter.

One of the best things about the entire Bob O'Link program, in Williams' estimation, is that it gives the student trainee a chance to decide if he wants to make a career of being a course supt. As pointed out before, about three out of ten who have trained under Williams have gone into other phases of turf work, including research. The net result, at least, has been that the 30 young men who have attended Williams' summer schools in the last

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seven years haven't gone chasing up any blind alleys in search of a career.

Four Live at Club

Four of the trainees live in comfortable quarters that have been fixed up for them in the Bob O'Link maintenance building and four room in Highland Park. None has offered any kind of a discipline problem and all, according to Williams, are quite serious young fellows who aren't adverse to occasionally opening and studying a textbook on turf. Each of the eight has at least another year of schooling ahead of him and all intend to return to Bob O'Link next summer to further their practical education. The best golfer among the group is acknowledged to be George Druzisky, who plays to a six handicap. Fred Opperman, who never had swung a club until June of this year, occasionally plays the tough Bob O'Link course in sub-100 figures.

Bob O'Link is not the only club that has a student training program. At least three others in the Chicago district, Olympia Fields, Gleneagles in Lemont, Ill. and Glen Oak in Glen Ellyn, Ill., have summer schools for prospective supts. Both Warren Bidwell at Olympia and Walter Fuchs of Gleneagles have three youngsters learn-

ing the practical side of turf work, and Ray Gerber of Glen Oak has one young man under his wing.

Serve Yourself Shop

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displays closeouts in apparel and the price reductions convert slower-moving merchandise into cash as well as clear the inventory for buying of Christmas and spring merchandise.

Everett and Cotton say that the junior program at Butte Des Morts is easing the club trade-in problem. Members' children are eager for clubs so the clubs go to the kids instead of being turned in on a new set.

When the club built a new pro shop in a building close to the first tee, and convenient to the clubhouse, Leonard recommended that attractive simplicity and utility rather than anything fancy be the keynote.

Not Satisfied with Lighting

The building's exterior and interior is natural redwood. There is considerable window space. Leonard and Beavers are not satisfied with the lighting and intend to have changes made, especially in the