

Manager's Role in Need of Upgrading

*Management weaknesses exist
because clubs are reluctant
to delegate proper authority*

(First of two articles)

By **JOSEPH W. DRAGONETTI**

WITH an ever-widening market and increasing participation in the sport by a growing cross-section of the population, and especially keener interest by women, the business of golf is becoming more complex. The changes which are occurring demand a sharpening of management techniques in golf and country clubs.

This thesis is developed by Leo Fraser, who views the need from a rather unique position in the golf world. He fills a triple post at Atlantic City CC, Northfield, N. J. He is the pres., general mgr. and pro. In addition, he operates in partnership with Harlan Will, pro and manager of the Fairview CC, Quentin, Pa., a golf club management consultant service. Fraser also is pres. of the Philadelphia Section of the PGA.

So, he speaks from a wide background of experience in the business side of golf as well as the techniques of the game itself. At 50, he is also a top golfer and has been playing the game since he was six. His father, the late James Fraser, was a pro; his brother, the late "Sunny" Fraser, was one of the game's top players. Golf is



Leo Fraser

in his blood and he loves the game, but he also knows that a club has to be operated economically if it is to meet the needs of its members.

Because of Fraser's background, we asked him to offer some constructive criticism on the management problems of golf which have been brought into much sharper focus by a growing interest in the game. He talked freely, even to the point of becoming provocative, in order to give definite answers and to express his opinions on techniques which he feels will help the game.

Chairman of Group

His major aim, he says, is to upgrade the role of the general mgr., a point often made in Fraser's reports following the survey of a club in his consulting work. He says that the manager should really be the board chmn. in close teamwork between the mgr., the pro and the supt. Moreover, he says that a good manager should be worth a basic salary of from \$12,000 to \$18,000 a year.

"I have always believed," he says, "that the management of golf and country clubs can be improved and with the growing market today the need is greater than ever. The weaknesses that have been apparent, and still exist in many cases, are not so much the fault of the mgrs. but are due to a lack of authority and a chain of command which is not clearly defined. Golf is a business and it should be run like a business. Actually, today we need Triple-A management."

At this point, Fraser paid tribute to the work being done in the managerial field by the Club Managers Association.

"The Club Managers Association staff," he says, "maintains a very alert and well-organized and intelligent liaison in Washington. It keeps abreast of the various bills in Congress that might adversely affect clubs throughout the country."

"We are kept advised by CMAA through bulletins and other communications, on tax bills and other legislation which might adversely affect our clubs," Fraser continues. "This is important when you consider that our tax burden now is terrifically high. A club which collects \$75,000 in dues, has to pay an excise tax of \$15,000. A club which collects \$5,000 in locker fees has to pay \$750 in taxes."

Fraser says that the schools and seminars for club managers sponsored by the association have also done an excellent job to upgrade the profession.

"No question about it," he says, "the

CMAA Adopts New Plan for Club Management Workshops

Club Managers Assn. of America will again hold its regular slate of workshops in various locations throughout the U. S. between July and early October, but this year's setup is being changed to launch the first phase of a five-year short course in club management. All 1961 sessions will cover Financial Management, Reporting and Controls. Future workshops will concentrate on such topics as Building & Property Management, Promotion and Sales Management, Food and Beverage Operation and Personnel Management. In covering only one phase of club management at a time it is felt that the various subjects will be more intensely dealt with and that persons attending the workshops will get more overall benefit out of them. The same faculty will teach at all workshops.

Here is the schedule:

- July 17-19 University of California
- 19-21 University of Dallas
- 26-28 Cosmos Club, Washington, D. C.
- Sept. 11-13 Michigan State University, East Lansing, Mich.
- 18-22 Statler Club, Cornell U., Ithaca, N. Y.
- Oct. 2-4 Coeur d'Alene CC, Hayden Lake, Idaho

work of the Club Managers Association has been effective. I wish I could say, however, that all club mgrs. perform their duties as conceived by the association."

Some Poorly Trained

Unfortunately, he adds, there are a number who are ill-trained for the job, and club directors should make intensive inquiries before hiring a man. The economies as well as the complexities of the situation demand careful selection.

"Even the smallest club today," Fraser says, "is hardly ever worth less than a quarter million dollars as far as property is concerned and some run up to three million in value. The amount of business done by these clubs annually ranges anywhere from \$100,000 up to a million or more."

"This alone should prove my point that only the most capable men should be sought to operate country and golf clubs."

What then is Fraser's conception of an
(Continued on page 88)



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Manager's Role Needs Upgrading

(Continued from page 26)

ideal country club mgr?

1. He must be basically well-trained and have considerable experience.
2. He must have a working knowledge of auditing and inventories practices.
3. He must understand bar and food control.
4. At all times he must keep alert to the price structures of the various expense items in a club.
5. He must continue to play the role of a constructive leader — continually training his employees in the special needs of country club work. He must stress the importance of courtesy, tact and giving attention to details. He must, by proper conduct, win and keep the respect of employees and members.
6. He should know how to plan a menu.
7. He should work in close cooperation with the pro and the supt. and he should have a working knowledge of these other two key functions of a country club.
8. He should have authority, and a

salary commensurate with his ability.

Age Not a Factor

Age is not necessarily a factor, Fraser says, but a creative, personable and flexible personality are prime prerequisites.

"He must understand," Fraser says, "the psychology of golfers, the special needs that golf and country clubs fill, and be versatile. One minute he may be in the kitchen, working out a food problem with the chef. The next he may have to be tactfully explaining to Mrs. Jones, who is the wife of one of the club's directors, that you can not give a luncheon for her ladies' group for \$1.75 a head that costs \$2.50 to prepare."

Of course, Mrs. Jones may have influence with one of the club's committees, she may complain vehemently and the mgr. may have a delicate situation on his hands. If he's smart, he learns how to ease out of these situations.

This brought Fraser to a discussion of the whole committee set-up in golf and country clubs. He feels that in some cases they get out of hand and the tendency

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today should be toward a committee's advising the mgr. rather than making decisions on its own. A rather provocative theory — but Leo explains his reasoning this way:

"First of all," he says, "I think the mgr. of the club should be given the direct responsibility of running the club and should not be hampered in this operation by committees. Committees, of course, are useful, especially a policy committee which could consist of a board of directors.

Guided by Policies

"The general policies a board decides upon should be a guide for the manager, pro and supt. Many of the details of carrying out policy should be left to the judgment of these employees. In my opinion, the mgr. should report to the directors once each month. All suggestions and complaints should be aired at these meetings. In addition, the membership should be continuously reminded of what constitutes the policy of the club. The other committees, such as house, greens, entertainment, etc. should also be sounding boards where the mgr. can get ideas. But I have seen some cases in which committees have been laws onto themselves and

that is not good for the economic or social well-being of a club. In many cases, decisions by committees adversely affect a club.

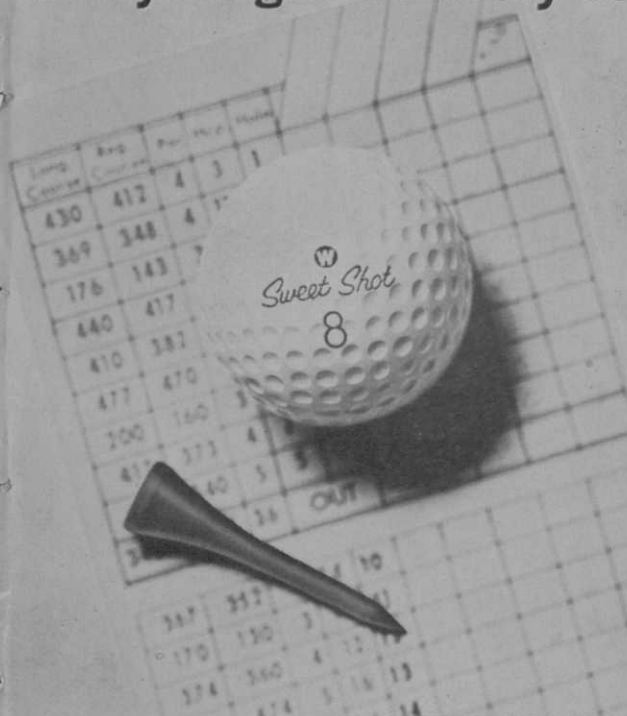
Inexperienced Go Overboard

"For instance, I have seen committees, such as entertainment, spend huge sums of money to make a special event successful. Of course, the people on it want to be helpful but through lack of experience they go overboard. The mgr. can be a good balance wheel in deciding what is to be spent on entertainment.

"This should be a business proposition like anything else. I am surprised sometimes to see directors of country clubs who are so meticulous about the economics of their own business go overboard when it comes to spending money for their clubs. Of course, there are also excellent chmn. of committees who handle their country club duties with experience and common sense. A great many have done wonderful jobs."

Case histories in club management will be discussed in the second part of this article in the July issue of Golfdom.

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