

# Clubs Need Men Who Can Coordinate All Operations

By HERB GRAFFIS

Golf business has hundreds of very good professionals. It also has hundreds of highly competent course supts. There are additional hundreds of experts in food and beverages handling and preparation, and in clubhouse operation who are managers of golf clubs.

Yet golf hasn't got enough businessmen. GOLFDOM has been repeatedly told of this shortage in discussions and correspondence with club officials.

Officials whose clubs offer jobs that will pay well above average, say that the men they want to hire are those who know how to fit their specialized knowledge as house managers, superintendents or professionals into the overall business of the club.

For a while the general manager policy seemed to be the answer. However its application has had spotty success. Now the plan is being re-examined at several clubs. It seems to have become a book-keeping and reporting service centered in one man and is not looked upon as an advance in the operation of a club. Criticism of the plan is based on inability to coordinate operations of all departments of a club. Such failure in most cases is due to lack of general golf knowledge.

Officials of first class clubs expect club managers, supts. and professionals to know enough about the business of departments other than their own, and enough about business condition of a club, to be qualified for better than ordinary salaries.

## Familiar with All Phases

The pro can't get one of the more desirable jobs now by merely being a pro. He has to be a man who is pretty well acquainted with all phases of the business of golf. He is expected to fit his job into the whole picture of the club's business.

The supt. in order to be well up in the five-figure salary class has to be more than a man who knows how to grow and cut grass.

Some supts. at a 9-hole course with a small budget and plenty of luck may have turf about as good for play as at some of the big clubs where the maintenance budget is \$75,000 and not a dollar of it wasted. The man in the small job may stay there, inadequately paid in both money and praise, while a fellow in charge of a big course is well paid and quite famous, not because his greens look any prettier or putt any truer than those of the small course, but primarily because he is a businessman.

## Seek Businessman's Advice

Recently we were asked to recommend experts in course maintenance who could advise a board of governors of a large club about improving its course. The request called for "an individual who can come in and inspect the situation at the club and submit findings and recommendations in a written report."

In this case the superintendent at the club actually is a very good man at turf work but is lacking as a businessman. He operates the course as a project in grass farming instead of as the department of a business having a large investment. He probably knows the maintenance and equipment needs and the modernizing the course should undergo as well as any outside "expert" but he isn't businessman enough to prepare a businesslike report on the situation.

Several weeks ago we were consulted by club officials who were considering revising their arrangement with the pro in a way that would sharply reduce his income. The club was losing money and members were getting fed up with assessments that paid for expenditures rather than far sighted improvements. Directors were close to pressing the panic button in their eagerness to add income to the club's coffers.

We urged cooling off and a lot of looking before leaping into the pro business. Club officials then sat down and closely examined a business they admitted they didn't know anything about—the pro department. The upshot was that the club president finally called us to tell that all was well between the board and the pro and that the pro's contract was being renewed.

## Somebody Had His Eyes Opened

The president said that he and the golf committee chairman had looked into the pro's record and talked over the dept. operations with him. "He was doing a better job of running his business than we



Located between an inland waterway and the ocean and with a highway running down the center is the Palm Beach (Fla.) Par 3 GC. Designed by Dick Wilson, the course extends to 2,688 yards, covers 27 acres and can be played in approximately 2½ hours. Twelve of the holes are on the ocean side of the highway where the clubhouse and a practice range and green are located. The clubhouse contains a pro shop, club storage area, lounge and restaurant. George McCampbell is pro, manager and supt. The owners of Palm Beach say that the course probably has more oceanside holes than any other in the U. S. Extra large greens are planted in Tifgreen and overall excellent condition of the course has excited much comment since it was opened. Four lakes and 55 traps dot the Palm Beach landscape.

operation with him. "He had been doing a better job of running the shop than we had been doing in running the club," the club head stated. "There wasn't any sense in taking away his profit for doing what we haven't been able to."

The professional in question is a good businessman except for one point. He had neglected to inform and educate his members (particularly the club officials) about his general policies and practices in conducting an important department of the club's operations. The directors were thinking of "pro only" as an operation being run solely for the profit of the pro instead of as an essential element of the entire club business. Obviously, it was mainly luck that kept the professional in a job that he was handling well except for neglecting his information and goodwill program.

Time after time club officials have told us that after considering from 50 to 100 candidates for a pro job the man who has been selected is more than a pro—he is a golf businessman.

Golf business is peculiar in the wide differences of character that exist among private clubs and even in the types of semi-private and public courses. But all of them have one point in common: the men in command understand what money

says. When the club department head speaks in terms of money, as all businessmen do in presenting their reports or recommendations, his message identifies him as a business executive communicating with another executive.

The club manager who has been with a hotel chain knows something about businesslike attitudes and methods. He knows it isn't the fact that a fine dinner at the club might cost 110 per cent of what it is billed that gets the manager in trouble. Failure to present that data and the story behind it promptly and clearly to club officials is a mistake that is not overlooked by businessmen who are officers of the club even though they may expect money to be lost in house operations.

Often you see men who own expensive and highly profitable daily fee courses who started in golf as caddies, course laborers, lockerroom men or waiters. These fellows didn't develop into top men solely by their work as professionals, course superintendents or club managers. They were fundamentally good businessmen who made it a point to thoroughly learn the golf business. They are the ex-pros, the former supts. and the ex-managers whose bankers know them as rich and solid businessmen.