

RESERVE FOR EMERGENCIES

Most clubs have an ample machinery replacement fund, but what happens if the course is severely damaged?

By JOE DOAN

Approximately nine out of ten clubs make adequate budget provisions for regular or emergency replacement of machinery and equipment, but when it comes to setting up contingency funds for repairing large scale damage to the golf course, more than two out of three clubs neglect this altogether. This was brought out in a recent survey made among supts. from coast to coast.

Acts of God and, for that matter, man, apparently are taken into only small account by the people who prepare the budgets at country clubs. But that they are real and costly is evidenced by the many kinds of major and minor catastrophes that have caused damage to course property in the last four or five years. These include ice storms, tornadoes, hurricanes, erosion resulting from cloudbursts and ice storms among the more unusual ones, and winterkill, Dutch Elm disease, pump damage, fire loss, vandalism and assorted turf diseases among the usual ones.

Yes, Even Frit Flies

Elmer Border, supt. of El Caballero CC in Tarzana, Calif., had his budget thrown out of line two years ago by, of all things, a frit fly invasion that cost nearly \$1,000 to repel, and shortly thereafter had to spend about \$3,000 to rebuild three motors and pumps that went out on him. Two greenmasters report that their city water supplies have been shut off at several critical times in the last two or three years, making it imperative that they build ponds to insure that they have water when they need it. One of these clubs, which doesn't have a fund for emergencies, has appropriated money to construct two ponds; the other, however, apparently expects the supt. to build the ponds out

of his regular maintenance appropriation.

Most supts. feel that an emergency reserve fund amounting to from three to five per cent of their total budgets should be set aside each year for the maintenance department. In many cases, this would amount to about \$2,000 or \$3,000, enough at least to reclaim two or three damaged greens, according to most estimates. More than 50 per cent of the turfmen who answered the Golfdom query said that they have had to make extensive repairs to at least one green in the last two years. The cost of doing so is generally reflected by the figures submitted by L.A. Shields of the Standard Club in Atlanta, Ga. for a single green: Turf — \$1,400 and Labor — \$250. Shields, incidentally, feels that it is cheaper for his club to buy replacement turf than to grow it in its own nursery. However, 70 per cent of the clubs have turf nurseries and about 20 per cent have tree nurseries.

Would Provide A Cushion

Most greenmasters are of the opinion that an emergency course fund should be built up over the years so that it approximates at least \$10,000. This would provide a solid reclamation cushion in case the course were badly damaged by such as a tornado or extreme winterkill. Too often, the supts. say, a reserve fund program is started but the money set aside in it is diverted to replacing maintenance equipment or, as happens in many cases, is assigned to another department.

Some supts. think that clubs would be wise to make regular annual contributions to an emergency reserve and after it reaches a given figure, such as \$10,000, use the excess for needed or wanted capital improvements of the course. They feel that in some cases this would do away with or reduce the assessments that

normally are made when a capital building program is undertaken. But they feel that the excess should be diverted only to improving the course.

Equipment Fund Properly Handled

There should be no overlapping or intermingling of funds set aside in the machinery and course emergency reserves, the supts. declare. These should be kept separate and the golf course fund tapped to replace a piece of equipment, for example, only as a last resort. Supts., as a whole, have no argument with the way in which the machinery reserve account is handled. At most, but not all clubs, it is done in accordance with accepted accounting principles. Several greenmasters report that their equipment fund is replenished each year by a specified amount that is based on the total replacement of machinery over a period of perhaps eight or ten years.

But the course emergency fund, if one ever is established, is a different matter. If a garage for golf cars is needed, the first thing one of the front office committees seizes on is the maintenance department's course emergency reserve. "What were up against," says James E. Thomas of the Army Navy Club in Arlington, Va., "is that the idea for an emergency fund for repairing damage to the course is kind of a nebulous thing. A committee will agree that such tangible items as tractors and greenmowers wear out and have to be replaced, so it is willing to maintain a reserve for equipment. But few people will concede that a course can be hit by a tornado or cloudburst and damaged to the extent of \$25,000 or \$50,000. It can only happen to other courses. As a result, they keep putting off establishing a course emergency fund."

Fares Better Than Most

Thomas, incidentally, fares better than most supts. His executive committee can appropriate up to \$3,000 of capital improvement money at any time to apply to emergency expenditures. If this much is requested and the entire amount not spent, it reverts to the capital account. Thomas' Army Navy course was hit by a cloudburst more than a year ago and the creek banks were badly eroded. It is going to cost more than \$25,000 over the

next few years to restore them.

The Algonquin Plan

The Algonquin CC, in suburban St. Louis, has what people in the management end of the golf business consider the ideal replacement or emergency reserve. It covers all club departments, is pegged at \$25,000 and is built back to this amount when extraordinary expenditures are made from it. This is done even at the cost of a membership assessment. In 1960, the fairways at Algonquin were hard hit by disease and after it was decided to convert them to U3 Bermuda, \$5,000 was immediately appropriated so that Supt. Frank Bubany could get the job underway.

As Bubany points out, the Algonquin plan "makes living for the supt., club manager, etc. more bearable because we don't have to worry against the day disaster strikes."

The machinery and course emergency funds at Riverdale CC in Little Rock, Ark. are handled jointly, according to Harry R. Bryant, the supt. Members are assessed \$5 a month during the playing season so that sufficient money is fed into the reserve. At the end of the season, the unexpended portion is returned to the club's general fund. The CC of Darien (Conn.) permits its greenmaster, Vernon Burnham, to overstate his annual budget needs by approximately five per cent to take care of any untoward situations. Then, at the end of the season, unexpended portions of the maintenance budget are applied to making changes and improvements in the course.

Provide for Vandalism

Few clubs, though, have farsighted policies such as those cited above. Widespread vandalism in recent years has prompted some of them to appropriate small amounts for replacing or repairing stolen or damaged property, but that is as far as it goes.

As Paul Frank, supt. at Hole-in-the-Wall CC, Naples, Fla., points out, the course emergency fund is one more thing the supt. has to try to sell to the members. Too many times he is rebuffed because constantly changing green committees never warm up to his views. This,

(Continued on page 104)

Grau's Answers

(Continued from page 80)

the production fields. Those who buy large quantities of Merion seed (sod growers, new golf clubs) will do well to buy on specifications that provide for "Zero tolerance of poa annua, bent and poa trivialis" with suitable penalties for non-performance. Seed from Europe and parts of the U. S. most often contains objectionable impurities. Duich says that when a customer buys in good faith he should receive what he expects to get.

Disease: Fusarium roseum has developed into a major headache for many. Commonly believed to be a cool-season fungus, it operates at high temperatures. No one seems to be certain of the most effective treatment for this disease.

Phythium, helminthosporium and curvularia took their toll. Dexon, Zineb and others helped reduce losses. Hydrated lime was a "hot" item on dealers' shelves for ½-pound per-1,000 sprays to check leafspots and to revive tired.

Spring deadspot on Bermuda is reported to be stopped by fall applications of a compound called Spring-Bak.

Developments of Interest

Duich's soil-mixture studies at Penn State cover the greatest area and range of materials in the world. There will be a constant flow of data for many years. Field and lab studies are leading to increased levels of understanding of necessary individual factors for modifying soils for heavy recreational use.

Juska's work at Beltsville on phosphorus cites applications of 4,000 pounds of P_2O_5 to the acre without injury. The report will be extremely interesting.

Daniel's report No. 28 from Purdue on electric warming of soils for sport turfs makes interesting reading.

Couch's book on Turf Diseases fills a need in this field. Penn State's Circular 510, "Control Turfgrass Diseases," is a useful ready reference.

Florida reports a Bermuda that needs no mowing.

Youngner, California, reports creeping red fescue far in the lead when overseeded on Bermuda turf.

Engel, New Jersey, predicts that confusion is likely because of rapid release of bluegrass varieties that have not had adequate testing.

Emergency Reserve

(Continued from page 62)

or clubs become so accustomed to escaping large scale emergencies that they come to think they are immune to them.

"On second thought," says Frank, "it shouldn't be left up to the supt. to have to sell the club on an emergency reserve. The club should be operated on enough of a businesslike basis to automatically provide for it."

Members Hard Hit

A good deal of financial distress has resulted at clubs where there hasn't been some kind of an emergency reserve fund to help pay for the damage caused by major catastrophies such as hurricanes, tornadoes, etc. Members have been taxed with extraordinary assessments to pay for repairs, or it has been necessary to obtain large bank loans to handle them. The blow in many cases could have been softened if a fund had been accumulated over the years to provide for emergencies.

Clubs have no choice but to provide their own catastrophe insurance, by the way, because the cost of obtaining protection against windstorm, vandalism, etc. is prohibitive.

Poa in New England

Referring to the article on pythium that appeared in the September issue of Golf-dom (page 28), Burt Anderson, supt. at Augusta (Me.) CC, points out that Arthur Anderson at Brae Burn in Newton, Mass., and Manuel Francis at Vesper CC in Lowell have virtually eliminated poa annua in their greens, tees and fairways. It has taken them several years to do it with the use of arsenicals.

Quoting Burt Anderson: "To say that New England supts. are divided about going along with poa or getting rid of it means that Art Anderson and Manny Francis are on one side of the fence and the rest of us are enviously looking over at them."