

*If it's any consolation . . .*

## Trouble Can Show A Supt. Where the Weak Spots Are

BY HERB GRAFFIS

Sometimes I wonder what is the use of a supt. worrying so much about what it costs to operate a course. He can study his records for past years and make up a sound budget. Then along comes a blow such as winterkill, experienced in New England two years ago and which called for a marvelous job of repair work at the Country Club of Brookline (Mass.) prior to the National Open. Or up will jump the devil with a hurricane and/or bad water, such as was the primary cause of trouble that called for rescue work before the Canada Cup tournament in Hawaii last December. Or, perhaps, there will be the blight, such as that which, in a few days last summer, transformed some glorious courses in the Midwest into ghastly exhibits of afflicted turf.

With something like any of these things, there goes the budget all to hell. This could and should be partly anticipated by a budget item for reserve for repairs. Incidentally, I never have seen in very many of the hundreds of golf course budgets that I have examined where allowances have been made for repair reserves.

### Cultivate the Manager

Speaking of budgets, one time at a Mid-Atlantic session I heard the general manager of a club, a very competent, honest man, tell the supts. not to forget that the books are kept in the clubhouse. He gave them a tip that to make their figures look good to club officials, they should be a friend to the manager.

*This article is a digest of a speech given by Herb Graffis at the Mid-Atlantic GCSA annual conference in Baltimore, Md., Jan. 11-12.*

There is the possibility, rarely realized by supts., that the manager also has a tough job. A veteran manager once told me his job meant getting up in time to show four crabby, old members that the manager is on the job while they were having breakfast and staying up on the job until he practically had to kiss the last drunk good night.

As regards budgets, I noticed in the annual report of a club, with which I am well acquainted, that last year's bar revenue was \$85,206.70, with a net 40,-826.60. The course expense was \$48,-172.75 and guest green fees were \$17,221,



Two seniors in the University of Rhode Island's College of Agriculture, Robert T. Leonard of Riverside (l) and Louis L. Lombardi (center) of West Warwick, receive John Samuel Clapper scholarships for outstanding work in turf culture from Dr. Robert C. Wakefield, chairman of the department of agronomy and mechanized agriculture. The award is made annually by Orville O. Clapper of West Newton, Mass., in honor of his father, who was a pioneer in the development of modern turf.

making the net maintenance expense a very low \$30,951. As a practical thing, the course expense at most private clubs should be figured on the overall cost minus green fees. On that basis, at the club I have cited, the net maintenance cost per round would be much less than \$2.

### Do the Members Understand?

The money part of a supt's. operation is understood by officials and members. They know very little, if anything, about the rest of a supt's business. The green committee members may have heard about mechanized maintenance but they do not know that even with all the ingenious men, all the smart and keenly competitive companies on the job to de-

wise ways to mow fairways quicker, the mowing speed is not much faster (except for the wider cut of gang mowers) than it was 25 years ago. In addition to the mowing job, supts. now have as part of their standard procedure verticutting, aerifying, leaf removal, fungicide and herbicide application, golf car path maintenance along with such heavy traffic that they have had to start thinking about doing the work at night.

Members want good turf and know that strains of grass have been improved for golf courses. But, just when a supt. thinks he has a bent or Bermuda that is the answer, he finds that there is some change in the water that is bad for the grass. This, the green committee does not always understand.

#### "Silent Spring" Condition

Understanding, however, of the mutual problems by the supts., the university and manufacturers' researchers and the green section's experts has brought cooperation that very few would have imagined 25 years ago. Yet, one hears some supts. say that we may have reached, in some respects, a "Silent Spring" condition as the result of using certain chemicals. Other men whose scientific knowledge and integrity merit confidence will defend the use of a particular chemical that happens to be in question. Some of these men are right and some are wrong in this sort of situation. But of one thing be sure. The supt. is the one who will catch hell if he thinks or guesses wrong. But I guess he's resigned to that.

What a supt. has to work with is important. There are times when I think I am the only person in the United States who is not a golf course architect. In some instances, I realize that whoever owned the ground said to the architect, "There it is. Make a golf course of it." The architect did his best and probably still has some money due him on the job. But, a lot of times the difference between the design of what an architect knows to be a golf course and the construction of what a supt. regards as a good golf course is vast.

#### Golf or Grapes?

There have been times when I have thought that ground absolutely no good



Vernon Nash (center), supt. of the Champions GC, Houston, Tex., was honored at the club's annual rhubarb, held on Dec. 30. Nash was cited for his superb conditioning of the Champions' two courses. He was given a check for \$1,300 by Jack Burke (l) and Jimmy Demaret, members and suppliers.

for anything else is used for golf courses or growing grapes, as in Germany, France and Italy. They make some perfectly wonderful wine from grapes of the rocky hills of Europe and here other toiling wizards eventually make superb golf courses at locations that seem hopeless.

In Europe, where ground is at a premium, courses such as St. Andrews, Prestwick, Carnoustie and those at Sandwich, Portmarnock and Lahinch are in territory that looks to be worn out sheep pasture. But the true golfer, who is nearly spoiled by the luxury of U. S. golf course turf, gets delight out of playing on turf that in this country would have a supt. looking for another job.

#### Turf Improvement Abroad

John Monteith, a pioneer agronomist, after visiting courses in Scotland and England, said that he had never seen courses where God had done so much for golf and man so little. Yet, in the past eight years British greenkeepers and the organization originally known as the Board of Greenkeeping Research have been able to get a little money and have greatly improved golf turf. So, in many cases British golfers are beginning to get as exacting and as fussy as their American counterparts. However, with British golf club dues generally less than the equivalent of \$40 a year, the British course manager is also having a great time trying to do the impossible. That is the price that is paid for progress.

Doing the impossible is expected of a supt. I believe, though, that the most successful supts. are quite philosophical

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## Trouble and Weak Spots

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about being in a fix when they cannot perform miracles. The younger fellows worry themselves sick about what they are up against. Many times, for example, I have heard younger men at supts.' meetings confess that they are beginning to fear the summer. They know they have a job — a tough and terrorizing job even when things are going right.

After years in the business the older supt. realizes that if everything went perfectly in his job, any bum could run it. It is when those trying times come that the job calls for a mighty smart man. A good supt. even gets to the place where he makes an asset out of trouble. For example, I heard a very good supt. say something profound when studying the damage done to his course last summer when the Midwest courses were hit. This fellow — Norman Kramer, supt. at Point O' Woods (Benton Harbor, Mich.) — looked at the damage and said, "Just when I thought everything was perfect! But there is one good thing about it. I

now know where the weak spots are!" This is the spirit of the good supt. And, it is only one of the innumerable cases I have seen of gifted and strong-hearted men making good at one hell of a job.

♦♦♦♦

The more than 150 persons attending the annual conference of the Mid-Atlantic GCSA, which was held in collaboration with the University of Maryland, heard a variety of suggestions for handling the problems caused by increased play. Among those giving advice were James E. Thomas, Army-Navy CC supt, and Bradley J. Strouth, supt. of the Maryland National Capital park and planning commission. Giving watering talks were Charles G. Wilson of the Milwaukee Sewerage Commission, Joseph C. Tropeanon and Robert A. Moore of Aquatrols Corp. Stan Frederiksen of Malinckrodt described the "spring deadspot" cure of Bermudagrass in Baltimore-St. Louis belt.

Members of university agronomy staff summarized recent scientific developments of special interest to supts. Dr. H. L. Dunton covered turf work in Virginia;

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### 1965 USGA Competitions

June 17-19	National Open, Bellerive CC, St. Louis
July 1- 3	Women's Open, Atlantic City CC, Northfield, N. J.
12-17	Amateur Public Links, North Park GC, Pittsburgh
Aug. 3- 7	Junior Amateur, Wilmington (Del.) CC, South Course
6- 7	Americas Cup, St. Charles CC, Winnipeg, Man.
16-21	Girls' Junior, Hiwan GC, Evergreen, Colo.
23-28	Women's Amateur, Lakewood CC, Denver
Sept 3- 4	Baltimore (Md.) CC, Five Farms Course
13-18	National Amateur, Southern Hills, Tulsa
Oct. 4- 9	Senior Amateur, Fox Chapel GC, Pittsburgh
13-15	Senior Women's Amateur, Exmoor CC, Highland Park, Ill.

Dr. Ralph Engel covered New Jersey and Dr. Elwyn Deal, Maryland. Dr. Stephen Bachledler spoke on "What Every Supt. Should Know About Plant Diseases." Dr. Joseph Duich of Penn State brought the supts. up to date on weed control. Dr. Fred Grau gave a talk on fertilization.

Dr. Raymond P. Korbobo of Rutgers Univ. Dept. of Horticulture talked on landscaping a country club. Robert Shields, Woodmont supt., and David W. Moote, national GSCA president, spoke on personal aspects of course management.

### Club Celebrations

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be released to newspapers and radio and T.V. stations as soon as decisions are made.

#### What Is Gained

Golf clubs across the country have proved time and again that celebrations are well worth the necessary time and money investments. Effectively sponsored celebrations can:

1. Improve relations with members.
2. Help build community goodwill.
3. Increase use of both course and pro shop.
4. Give you a good indication of where a club stands with regard to members, the local community, and civic leaders.