

*Park Commissioner, Pro, Supt.,  
Manager, Head Tractor  
Driver, etc., etc.*

# Name the Job- Taylor Handles It at Black Mountain

By JOE DOAN

**R**oss Taylor is a man for all seasons — which is not only an asset but a necessity in Black Mountain, N.C., where golf is played around the calendar. And, since Black Mountain isn't Winged Foot or Saucon Valley, Taylor has to be man of all occupations — club manager, pro, supt. head tractor driver and even on occasions, fry cook.

If Taylor had to answer to as many bosses as he has jobs, it would be enough to drive a man of even his equable temperament to distraction. But Ross has shown unusual foresight in picking his bosses. All happen to be himself, as he is not only the park commissioner of Black Mountain, but THE park commission. When the commissioner reprimands the supt. in a case like this, it stays in the family.

When Taylor isn't overseeing the different operations at his club, it isn't unusual for him to be summoned for consultation purposes to other clubs and locations in the Asheville area where fine turf is cultivated. He has designed courses and built them and supervised the renovation of others. Some years ago, when for some unexplained reason Ross wasn't working a 16-hour day from January through December, he managed to work in a moonlighting job as a turf supply salesman.

## **Cement Worker, Too**

A combination of environment and necessity have made Taylor a complete golf course man. When he came to Black Mountain GC in 1941 from Asheville CC,



Ross Taylor and his wife, Martha, who runs the clubhouse at Black Mountain GC, are seen with an oil painting of the club's 13th hole. Mrs. J. C. Glenn of Delray Beach, Fla., painted the picture.

he was a turf specialist. Then, World War II reduced the club's staff to the extent that Ross had to fill in first as manager and later as pro. If there was carpentry, plumbing, cement work or a machinery overhaul job to be done, he did it. When the original 9-hole course, built in 1931 with WPA labor, was renovated several years ago, Taylor supervised it. When a second nine was added in 1962-63, he designed and constructed it.

## **Victim of Environment**

"Don't overemphasize my alleged versatility," the Black Mountain pro-manager-supt., etc., says, smiling. "I'm a creature of my environment — or a victim of it. When the different vacancies occurred, I guess it was natural that I should fill them. There was nobody else around. Actually, my wife, Martha, has always run the clubhouse. She lets me think that I tell her what to do.

"Together, we are doing what many husband and wife teams around the country are doing — running a golf club," Taylor explains.

The Black Mountain factotum concedes that his duties as a pro have been rather spotty. He has tapered off from teaching in recent years, but in the mid-'50s gave

as many as 200 lessons a year. Back in 1927, when he broke into golf, he was an assistant pro. Then he drifted away from the shop and it wasn't until around 1943 that he began selling merchandise and teaching again.

When he came back to the pro job, Taylor says he was no better than a fair player. At first, when he started to teach, it was a case of staying a lesson ahead of the pupil. "Some of these early teaching trials were difficult for both myself and the pupil," Ross recalls. "But I worked hard at the job, found I liked it, and eventually got to the place where I felt I was giving the pupil some help. At least,



Everything is uphill or downhill at Black Mountain, which is located in Blue Ridge mountains. Eighteenth green is in the foreground. Evangelist Billy Graham lives beyond one of the ridges in the distance.

I had a hand in developing several pretty good golfers." Now, Taylor does a limited amount of teaching at the club, coaches the Montreat College golf team and runs an instruction program at nearby Camp Rockmount.

#### Built Several Courses

Besides supervising the re-building and new building projects at his Black Mountain club, Taylor has designed and built the course at Spruce Pine, N.C., re-designed Malvern Hills in Asheville and re-

built all greens at Waynesville CC and Lake Lure. He has served as a consultant in the construction of other courses in the Swannoa Valley area and, as already mentioned, is on call as a turf consultant for several clubs, nurseries, schools and industries.

Taylor is a charter member of the Carolinas GCSA and has been president of that organization for four terms at different times. In recent years, the Carolinas turf group has been able to persuade the N.C. state legislature to appropriate funds to support a turf research program at North Carolina State University and also establish a turf management course at that school.

Just this spring, Taylor staked out 20,000 square feet in bent, bluegrass and Bermuda experimental plots at Black Mountain for Dr. W. B. Gilbert, NCSU agronomist. He not only worked diligently with other turfmen to get the state legislators to pass the laws that gave the university its research and school programs, but as a personal mission, has visited numerous high schools throughout the state selling turf management as a career for youngsters.

#### Another Test Site

At the moment, Taylor is preparing a site at his club for a second North Carolina State research project, conducted by William Lewis. It is going to be a pre-emergence control center where the resistance of bluegrass and fescue and bent-grasses to crabgrass and broad leaf weeds will be tested over a five-year period.

Taylor was the first supt. in the Carolinas to experiment with Bermuda 127 and 57 as fairway covers. Both strains proved to be durable enough, yet unacceptable because of the obnoxious seed-heads they produce. When he renovated the old nine at Black Mountain and built the new side, Ross decided on bluegrass and fescue for the fairways. The original South German bent was retained on the old greens, but the new were planted to a combination of Pennlu, Old Orchard, C-7 and Seaside. All these strains were grown in the Black Mountain nursery.

Since Black Mountain is about 2,500  
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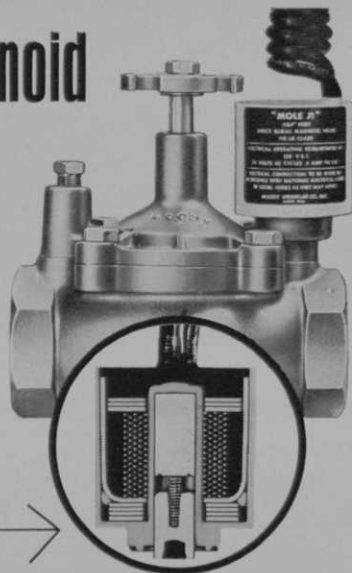
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## Man For All Jobs

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feet above sea level and temperatures rarely go over the 90-degree mark, Taylor's greens are rarely hard hit by disease. Treatment with iron sulphate, Capton and Thiram is kept on the light side, is considered preventative, but is made weekly through the summer. The big battle during the summer is fought against crabgrass, which comes in in June and persists through September. PMAS has been used primarily for crabgrass control, but Taylor is planning to start small scale testing of both spray and granular formulations that Lewis, the NCSU agronomist, has developed.

Taylor's green fertilization program calls for applying approximately one pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet a month. Following double aerification in March, topdressing and verticutting, 10-6-4, at a rate of a little better than a pound a month, is applied from April through June. Thereafter, treatment is cut down, with an organic being sub-

stituted. Ross has two soil tests made annually and strives to keep the pH level at 6.5.

Black Mountain got nationwide publicity a little more than a year ago when newspapers across the country carried stories of its 745-yard, par 6 No. 17 hole. It is said to be the longest hole in the country. A small church is located about two-thirds of the way down the fairway and adjoining it is a cemetery. Only four eagles have been scored on No. 17 in the 15 or so months the second nine has been in play.

Ross Taylor's good friend, Billy Graham, lives just beyond the ridge that is the backdrop for the second nine and is a frequent visitor to the Black Mountain course. The world famed evangelist presided at the dedication ceremonies that opened the new side a little more than a year ago. Graham, incidentally, is an accomplished golfer, often shooting in the high 70s.

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