

# Accent on management

by Ken Emerson



Educational seminars for club officers and directors is a field that is currently being explored by the National Club Association.

Although representatives of clubs in a single geographical area have often met informally to compare notes on mutual problems and while local and state golf associations have made it possible to share even more information on a wider level, only recently has any attempt been made to bring club officers together in a purely educational atmosphere in order to make them more proficient administrators.

It is, however, a natural and logical function of the industry's trade association to do so and such a program will soon be launched.

As pioneered by the Vancouver Golf Club, which hosted its second successive director's seminar in February of this year, the program will make use of the talents of the professional club manager, reinforced by the golf course superintendent, the golf professional and experts in insurance and club financing.

A similar endeavor has just been concluded at the Meridian Hills Country Club, which was the host club at a symposium attended by two club officers and the club manager of seven clubs in the Indianapolis area.

The purpose of the Vancouver seminars has been to acquaint its own club officers with the specific problems they face during their administrations and to indoctrinate and direct potential club directors and officers in the duties and obligations that go with club service.

The Indianapolis symposium was more specific; it reviewed the problems and areas of mutual interest where discussion would lead

to solutions that would be of immediate benefit to the participants.

Because the National Club Association's seminars, which will begin next year, will combine many of the methods and goals of both, it is appropriate to take a closer look at the programs and some of their conclusions.

Because it is the older program and represents a continuing and evolving plan, the Vancouver seminar is the more sophisticated of the two.

Club manager J.H. Thompson has divided the study session into five general areas of interest, with about equal time being given to each. These are:

1. Club Management
2. The Clubhouse
3. The Pro Shop
4. The Golf Course
5. Finance and Insurance

The last of these, finance and insurance, was handled by two speakers in 1967 and by three in 1968. This year, one speaker was used to review the source and application of funds, income and expense trends over the last three years, and budget control and interpretation of the financial statement.

Another covered the annual audit, while a third discussed insurance, appraisal of property, and coverage for fire, theft, liability, etc.

The club's golf course superintendent reviewed the conditioning and care of the course, turf management, personnel and services and the problems facing a superintendent.

The golf professional discussed his relationship with the members, pro shop operations and services, tournament policy and reviewed golf cart regulations.

The clubhouse portion of the program was centered on general sta-

tistics, catering, accounting and custodial and staff services and responsibilities.

Club manager Thompson presented a management program which included the theory and practice of club administration and the relationship of the board, committees, staff and consultants.

At Meridian Hills the program was confined to golf, finance, and house. The meeting broke into three groups to discuss these simultaneously.

In their review of house problems, the officers and managers shared information on member-reaction to—and the success of minimum house charges and menu selections and presentation. Also in the spotlight were the problems, dangers, and advantages of permitting cash sales and the affect of the most recent interpretations of the Fair Labor Standards Act on the private club industry. (It was noted that many clubs in other areas have gone to a five day week in their efforts to maintain an economical operation.)

Interest was also expressed in the obligations of private clubs in supporting liquor regulations and legislation.

The golf group compared experiences with the center cup watering on greens (all favorable) and the advantages of Poa, Merion Blue, and Kentucky Blue Grass on their fairways. Considerable time was spent discussing caddy programs and the increasing difficulty of insuring the availability of competent caddies.

From these three individual meetings the group reconvened for a general discussion, with Meridian Hills president Richard Petticrew, as moderator. The chairman of each group spoke for 15 minutes, high-

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lighting the results of his meeting, and then opened the session to an additional question-and-answer and discussion period.

In the evaluation which followed the seminars it is interesting to note that there was general unanimity as to their value. Throughout the post-meeting review participants expressed a sense of surprise and appreciation at the professional ability shown by club staffs and the evident skills required in meeting their responsibilities; an expression which would seem to reinforce an opinion held by many club administrators that most club members do not recognize the talent and ability of their professional staff simply because they are not aware of the problems they face.

Other comments clearly indicate that those who attended were, for the first time, suddenly aware that the rapid and inevitable turnover of a club's board makes it impossible for most directors to have more than a superficial knowledge of their club's history and problems, or of current trends in club policies and operations.

It is in this new awareness of the problems of the club professionals that the real value of these seminars lies. And it is the recognition by both member and manager alike that there is a need to educate the club director in the principle of club administrations—that the knowledgeable director can smooth the way for the manager—that has consistently assured the past success of such seminars.

It is this need that future programs must continue to fill.



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