

CONVENTION FLASHBACK



Convention notes

In Denver during the 52nd annual meeting of the Golf Course Superintendents Assn. of America (February 7 to 11), there were many moments of truth for the golfer who pays and pays and pays. The program was fundamentally money-oriented. And superintendents took the realistic

view that how much they get paid depends on what the golfer can afford to pay.

Superintendents were also concerned about ecologists' cry for a reappraisal of chemical treatment of turf. Consensus was that some revisions of treatments are inevitable, not because course managers have been stupid or selfish in sinning

against man and his environment, but because the politics of the situation require changes of some sort.

But economics rather than ecology headlined the program that drew 4,000 to the conference. About 3,300 were superintendents; others were their wives and the salesmen at the 112 exhibits of equipment, supplies and services.

Labor continues to account for 60 to 70 per cent of the maintenance costs of most courses. One section of the program was devoted to the problems of recruiting, training, managing and rewarding golf course labor. There were bright sides to the labor situation. One was shown when Robert O. Williams, superintendent, Bob O' Link GC, Highland Park, Ill., and GCSAA president in 1958, was presented with a plaque signed by 48 superintendents and assistant superintendents he had employed on their ways up. One unusual item in the Williams use of young men in Bob O' Link maintenance was the summer he employed one-third of the turf management class at Penn State.

Also reflecting a healthy executive level working condition in golf business was GOLFDOM's Annual Father and Son Luncheon. Present were 62 fathers and sons and sons-in-law in course management positions. The characters and achievements of the sons of veteran superintendents distinguish them as young men rated by golf business and their parents with justifiably high pride.

Greens gang mowers and automatic watering system equipment headlined the vast equipment display. There were lots of debates about the merits of various makes of mowers. Superintendents did agree that on busy courses the gang green mowers are essential to keeping ahead of golfers and release crew members for other essential work.

Irrigation and drainage problems were the theme of one session that considered the headaches of unsuitable water and the importance of adjusting watering to course requirements. Overwatering continues to be a frequent fault in course maintenance, experts noted, but it is being reduced by the automatic programs. Speakers repeated that the main problems with the automatic system is to get the correct installation.

"The Thinking Superintendent," a panel discussion directed at using brains to improve maintenance while

economizing money and time, had so much information applicable to course operations that this reporter would estimate this afternoon alone yielded enough ideas to more than compensate for the expense of sending superintendents to the convention.

A highlight of the conference was the tale told by slides and words of Fred Grau of the history, status and prospective development of course maintenance. The fantastic progress in course conditioning has been steady and generally lacking in "circus," so superintendents and golfers themselves don't realize what advances have been made. That's partially why superintendents haven't been able to follow the good advice given by John Husar, Chicago Tribune golf editor, about acquainting golfers with the immense improvement in golf due to superintendents' achievements.

Organization of ideas that superintendents and their chairmen get and channeling the notions into effective work on the course accounted for an intensely interesting and profitable series of lessons. Even the weather was weighed carefully on the budget scales in the manner in which golf course irrigation problems were viewed.

Discussions about GCSAA's certification program seem to be easing almost to where formally qualifying superintendents will be no more disturbing to competent men than applying for an automobile license. Veteran superintendents, who have been tested and promoted, and the agricultural school graduates in course management claim their work is more complex, more exacting and more urgent than the jobs of their associates in the golf clubs' table of organization, so it's more difficult to identify a capable man for course management than it is to examine and rate a club manager or pro.

Buying was reported as being better than during the previous two years. New equipment that saves labor on essential work, and equipment that gives touches of perfection to a course, watering equipment, a broad array of chemical controls and fertilizers, apparently okay from the ecological angle, had sales managers in a bright mood.

The improvement in the actual or tentative buying was noted by some course equipment and supply dealers who recalled that last year there were slow payments by some clubs



of a Class A type of membership, socially and financially.

Proceedings of the conference are valuable reading for a green chairman of a private club or owner or man in over-all charge of a pay-play course. Cost is \$3 to a GCSAA member; \$10 to a non-member. Order from the Golf Course Superintendents Assn., 3158 Des Plaines Ave., Des Plaines, Ill. 60018.

—Herb Graffis

Election results

President, Richard C. Blake, superintendent, Mt. Pleasant CC, Boylston, Mass.; vice president, Robert V. Mitchell, superintendent, Sunset CC, St. Louis, Mo.; directors, Charles G. Baskin, CC of Waterbury, Waterbury, Conn.; Richard W. Malpass, Riverside G & CC, Portland, Ore.; and Paul E. Mechling, Sylvania CC, Sylvania, Ohio.