

*The problems that exist at golf clubs today didn't just happen. They have resulted from the way officials and the professional staff have approached their jobs in relation to the total operations at a club*

Club officials and the professional staffs at golf clubs and courses are aware that something is wrong. The animal is not operating in the manner designed or desired. Revenue is slightly increasing while costs are soaring off the end of the scale. Invariably the rationalization reached in examining the predicament is to say, "Well everything is getting more expensive." Few officials, if any, really look at the germ of the problem: the way in which the club or course is managed. This management must objectively face the problems; if it doesn't, the problems will be compounded.

The two basic problems which exist in golf operations management might be summarized as follows:

**Disassociated management:** a situation that develops when the golf professional, the club manager and the golf course superintendent think of their jobs as separate and distinct from one another.

**Avocational management:** a situation that develops when the various committee chairmen are actually involved in the day-to-day management activities of the club.

Neither situation is relatively close to sound business management.

A recent ground swell implies that there is a movement toward hiring a general manager for all operations at the club. This is well and good if the club is fortunate enough to select the right man for the job. Obviously, the wrong man can be a disastrous mistake. Why the ground swell? It's simple. Too many clubs are faced with the situation in which the members of the staff are disassociated with the objectives of the club or the governing body. All too often the professional, manager and superintendent feel that their jobs are not related to each other. Nothing could be further from the truth. If these three "managers" do not have common objectives the

result must be less efficiency and a product which is less than desirable.

The disassociation of objectives can come about through a variety of causes. The governing body of the club can favor one of the "managers" creating resentment among the other two. Policy decisions may be made without consulting the manager, the professional or the superintendent. This creates neutral feelings among the staff members. Also, disassociation is created when any one of the three consider his job and responsibilities more important to the success of the club than those of the other two.

The clubs that I have seen and would classify as top-flight operations invariably have one common ingredient—a team approach to the management of the club. Each individual—the superintendent, professional and the manager—bears the total responsibility for the total operations at the club. They do not have extremely distinct and separate lines of responsibility. Each is dependent on the other. All three have a common objective.

I favor this type of management structure for a club because each individual is related to the total objective. It prevents management skills from scattering in different directions. Obviously it is not a dead lock cinch that a club can always have three key individuals who are equal in ability. Invariably one of the three comes to the top; however, if he is a first-class businessman, he keeps the other two just as involved and informed as he is.

Objectives are reached by establishing perspectives which fit the club and are well understood. The governing body of the club must establish the proper perspective within its managerial staff. In my opinion the disassociated management may be a primary result of avocational management. It is amazing how all of us, myself included, assume, when we are elected or appointed to a position such as a board of directors, that virtually overnight we are experts on the entire operation. We all have a tendency of assuming the role of avocational managers. We try to run a business on a part-time basis with only limited knowledge at our disposal. The general result of our approach is to make decisions based upon emo-

tions rather than upon facts.

Assuming that a golf club has a qualified manager, professional and superintendent, the function of the governing body is quite simple—policy formulation—and nothing else. Should the qualified full-time professional staff handle the day-to-day management or should we do it on a part-time basis? If the club is in a situation where the staff is not capable of accepting this responsibility the club must get staff people who can.

Generally speaking, the professional, the manager and the superintendent are adequately compensated for their services. If the governing body is going to assume some of the responsibilities, that body had better review their contribution to the club operations and make the necessary adjustments. It is not the responsibility of the board to manage the club. It is the board's responsibility to set the policy regarding the management of the club.

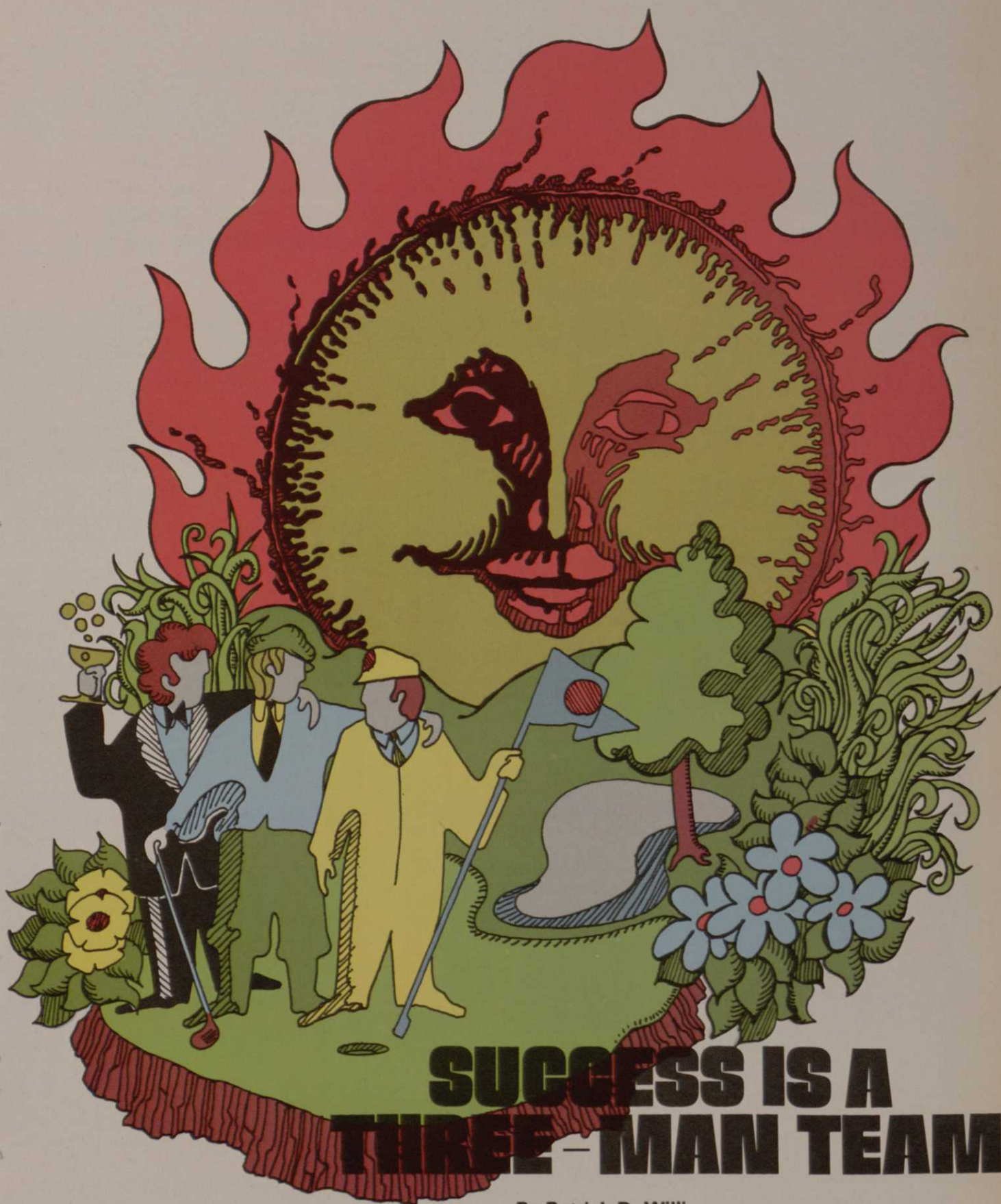
Even though most clubs are a non-profit operation, they have to be run like a profit operation. Sometimes clubs make decisions without regard to the dollars and cents involved. Or sometimes the dollars and cents become the sole factor for decision making. And on too many occasions decisions are made strictly on an emotional basis rather than on fact.

The atmosphere of a part-time management operation lends itself to avocational management. This is why policy cannot be construed as management. This is why the two must be separated.

Think about your club operation. Make sure you have policy formulation as the objective of the governing board. Leave the management to your professional staff. Insure that your management team has an associated not a disassociated management approach.

When these two criteria are met, then and only then will a club operate as a business unit and meet those objectives which benefit the entire management. □

Pat Williams served for four years as director of education and special projects for the Professional Golfer's Assn. He is currently partners with architect Don Sechrest in a golf course consulting firm and writes the regular column, "The Professional Approach."



# SUCCESS IS A THREE-MAN TEAM

By Patrick D. Williams