

PRESIDENTS AND OWNERS: HOW DO THEY RUN THEIR CLUBS?

by VINCENT J.
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Golf club presidents and owners, in general, 1) are trying hard to fill the voids in their membership rosters; 2) find the member-run committee system an inefficient method of club operation; 3) depend heavily on their administrative personnel—golf professional, manager and superintendent—in the total club operation; 4) favor greater decision-making power for these key employees.

These were the four significant points that came out of a formal GOLFDOM survey, conducted by an independent research company, of golf club presidents and owners throughout the country.

The survey sought opinion on four major topics: 1) membership conditions, 2) administrative employee relations, 3) committee system of operation and 4) policy on non-member income.

MEMBERSHIP CONDITIONS

Waiting lists for membership in private golf clubs are on the rapid decline. Over-all, only 30 per cent of the respondent clubs have waiting lists. However, 40 per cent of the member-owned clubs have waiting lists versus 18 per cent of the individually-owned clubs.

Along with the lack of waiting lists, many clubs are operating below their membership quotas. More than 60 per cent of the respondents reported that their clubs have instituted programs to attract new members. The most popular lure is offering associate or other types of limited memberships. Responses by type of program broke down this way: offering associate or other types of limited memberships, 23.3 per cent; offering incentives to present members to bring in new members, 18.9 per cent; waiving for a period of time certain initial costs, 18.9 per cent; offering memberships only for specific activities, 14.5 per cent; offering house memberships only, 11.1 per cent, and other methods, 13.3 per cent.

The growing popularity of offering limited memberships and memberships for specific activities is significant for the future of the club industry, because many clubs will become activities centers catering to specialized interests. Along with the core

of avid golfers, memberships also will include equally enthusiastic tennis players, swimmers, paddle tennis players, and so on. At such clubs, enterprising golf professionals will carry a broad spectrum of merchandise. And managers will be looking for new activities to ensure continued club growth.

ADMINISTRATIVE EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

In an effort to improve the efficiency of club operations, presidents and owners are bringing together their key administrative employees for meetings and planning sessions. Superintendents, golf professionals and managers are being brought out of the traditional confines of their specific responsibilities and into an atmosphere of total involvement. Some 79 per cent of the presidents and owners reported that they meet with their administrative employees regularly—42 per cent indicating weekly meetings and 32 per cent, daily meetings.

Of those respondents who said that they do not call regular meetings, 86 per cent indicated they meet on an irregular basis as problems arise or to discuss future plans. This means that less than 3 per cent of the respondents do not hold joint meetings with their administrators on either a regular or irregular basis.

Presidents and owners also reveal a high regard for the knowledge and opinion of their administrators. Some 95 per cent consult with or seek advice from the administrative employees, and 98 per cent said they invite the manager, professional and superintendent to present ideas or constructive suggestions on the club's operations.

COMMITTEE SYSTEM

The respondents were not as favorable toward the

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member-run committee system of operating a club. In questions on this subject, 71 per cent of the respondents felt the member-run committee system was not an efficient method of operating and 75 per cent said that such a system does not provide the club with the expertise necessary to operate the facility successfully, both in terms of economics and member service.

Asked which member-run committees are helpful in the operation of a club and should be retained, if a facility were reorganizing its policy-making and operating system, the three committees receiving the greatest response were: tournament committee, handicap committee and golf committee, respectively. Asked which are a hindrance to efficiency and they would eliminate, the three most frequently indicated were: green committee, house committee and grievance committee, respectively.

It is significant that three service-oriented member committees were looked upon favorably, whereas three committees involved with the internal operations and financial areas of the club were felt to be obstacles to efficiency. These points are allied to opinions on the member-run committee system versus a system whereby the manager, professional and superintendent, meeting directly with the club's board of directors, have a greater part in making decisions for their areas of responsibility. On this question, 78 per cent of the respondents favored the latter system over the member-run committee system. Therefore, presidents and owners would put greater decision-making power into the hands of the trained professionals as a means of obtaining a more efficient plant operation.

NON-MEMBER INCOME

The Internal Revenue Service's 5 per cent guideline on income from outside business has concerned many clubs, because any efforts to increase such revenue puts the club on the brink of losing its non-profit status. Some 34 per cent of the presidents of member-owned private clubs said that the guideline hampered the club's revenue earn-

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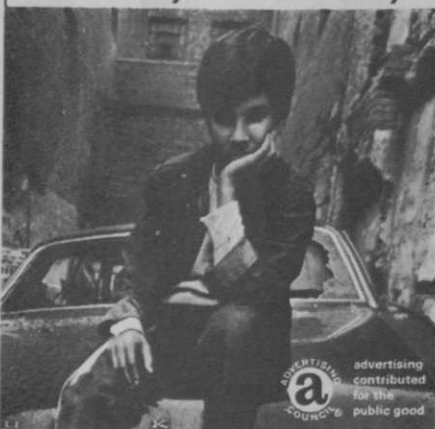
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a concern, too. Do you know of any way that the dust can be reduced short of eliminating liming? (Pennsylvania)

A—Superintendents who have hydraulic applicators (hydro-mulchers, hydro-seeders, hydro-grassers) have the problem licked, especially for putting greens and tees. In water suspension there is no dust. For 50 to 70 acres of fairways hydraulic spreading is a bit impractical and this is the area where dust is a big problem.

Very recently, I have received a sample of finely-pulverized limestone that has been pelletized into firm granules. This product is virtually dust free and can be spread with conventional gravity feed spreaders or with spinner type spreaders. The granules can be crushed with firm pressure from one's fingers. Dropped into water, the pellets quickly disperse and spread out in the familiar appearance of finely pulverized limestone.

One advantage of granules is that they roll off blades of grass. When moisture is supplied (rain or irrigation), they dissolve (they really disintegrate) and settle down to the job that lime is designed to do—without dust. You can expect the cost to be somewhat higher than conventional limestone.

In naming the company that designed and manufactures this pelletized lime (known as Granulime), I assume no responsibility for the product. I would prefer that Paul Perrine, president, answer the inquiries, rather than I. The company is Calcium Products Corp., P.O. Box 270, Aurora, Ind. 47001. The mine and plant are near Irvington, Ky.

No information has been given to me about Ca and Mg contents nor about the fineness (screen test) of the limestone prior to the granulating process.

This question and answer has been prepared to acquaint GOLF-DOM's readers with another step in progress toward refined management of turfgrass areas. It implies no recommendation for use or endorsement of the product. Those readers who are interested are asked to correspond directly with Paul Perrine.

JET FUEL DAMAGE

Q—Everyday there are 20 to 25 big jets that fly over my golf course in their landing pattern. I can see fuel being dumped as they approach the runway. The greens that lay beneath this approach pattern give me more trouble than all the others. Is there a connection? (Maryland)

A—There is a first time for everything and this is the first I've heard of possible trouble from dumped jet fuel. I don't know the answer, but I'll work with you to find the answer. I wonder if other clubs near big airports have had any similar experiences?

NATURE'S BOUNTY

Q—We have many, many plants of pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*) springing up all around our golf course, especially where the soil has been disturbed and organic materials have been placed for disposal. What is a good way to get rid of them? (Virginia)

A—Eat them! Boiled pokeweed greens are a delicacy superior to spinach. Poke is similar to asparagus. All you have to do is gather it, cook and eat it. You can freeze it for winter eating. But don't eat the purple berries. When pokeweed grows tall and the leaves are old and inedible, one can use the fleshy roots. If anyone wants to pursue the subject I will accept letters and answer all of them in the future. I cannot answer individual letters. □

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ing potential; 54 per cent indicated that their clubs have been refusing outside business because of the guideline. Twenty-five per cent of the presidents of member-owned facilities said their clubs have considered giving up their non-profit exemption to secure more non-member income. On first consideration, this figure does not seem great. However, on further consideration, it is considerable when viewed in light of the very advantageous tax status that would be lost. Therefore, these clubs must feel that the potential income that could be derived from outside business, even after taxes, would far outweigh any savings via an exemption. □