

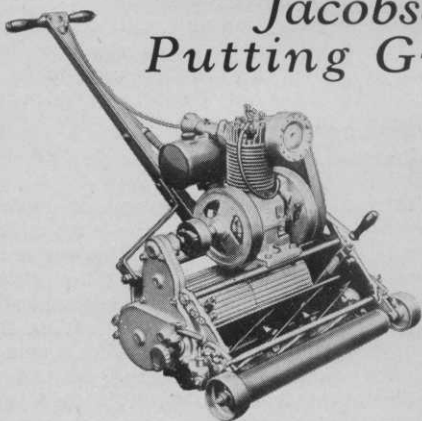


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Getting an "Even Break" for Club and Its Manager

By JACK PALMER*

Special Sales Director, Albert Pick & Co., Chicago

RELATIONSHIP of the club to the manager naturally it is a two sided affair and there is much to be said on both sides. Club managers are primarily interested in obtaining more consideration from club organizations and it is generally conceded the task of properly managing a club is the most difficult of all managerial duties. In seeking for additional consideration from club organizations, however, managers must keep in mind one of the fundamental principles in civics which is that for each privilege enjoyed there is a corresponding duty and while I may set forth some considerable criticism on the attitude of club organizations, as a whole, toward their managers, still the demand which club organizations believe they may rightfully put upon you must be kept in mind.

The attitude of the usual club organization toward the manager cannot help but make the manager's position a most difficult one. To my notion the usual club is not properly organized—on the contrary can be compared to Topsy who "just grew."

In addressing a hotel convention in Kansas City quite a number of years ago I made the statement that the hotel business was succeeding in spite of itself and not because of itself. Needless to say this statement created considerable caustic comment. Subsequent events, however, have proven the truth of this statement and today hotel operation is radically different than prior to Prohibition and the World War.

Crossing the Bar in Profits

At that time the profit from liquor sales made it possible for a hotel to lose money in the Catering Department and to accept a very nominal profit in the rooming end, knowing the year's operation would show a net result. Now, that the Bar has gone a different type of management has become necessary. Without any question the hotel industry is being operated in a business-like manner today and while, of

course, there is still much to be desired in some types of hotel operation, you are familiar enough with it to know it is for the most part intelligently handled.

Club operation finds itself in somewhat the same situation as did the hotel business some years ago, but for different reasons. You, too, have lost considerable revenue from liquor sales but this is not the point at which I am driving. Hotels are usually individually owned and operated. They are managed by proprietors or paid executives, who are responsible, usually, to one man, or two or three men, who have their money invested in the venture. This permits of centralized responsibility and makes it comparatively easy to establish a definite policy which, when successful, can be continuously pursued. This establishes the exact comparison between hotels and clubs, for what with constantly changing directorates the club which has operated under one policy for a number of years is indeed an exception and until club organizations devise some way in which to eradicate this evil they cannot hope to be as successful as other businesses which are operated in a sane manner.

At Mercy of Inexperience

It is a distressing comment on modern economic conditions that the huge investments we find in club properties are at the mercy of a type of operation which would not be tolerated in any other business with which I am familiar. The old saying that everybody's business is nobody's business applies exactly to club operation. An investment of from \$1,000,000.00 to \$5,000,000.00 in club properties is not an unusual thing and this enormous investment is guided by a Board of Directors, none of whom as a rule have had any experience in operation of this type. It would be difficult to visualize a more ridiculous situation. How many times have you seen the directors of your club in session? They are men from all walks of life—doctors, dentists, real estate men, manufacturers of steel or textiles, or implements, all with wrinkled foreheads trying to figure out the

*Address at Club Managers' National Convention.

grubs?

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ARSENATE OF LEAD

"why" for the loss in the catering department last year and just what is to be done about it. As a rule they pay very little attention to the manager and the wonder is they are able to do anything about it. Furthermore, the unsuccessful operation of many club properties is directly traceable to the ignorant conduct of its affairs. You and I know these men are most sincere, are anxious to give freely of their time and effort but if time and effort are expended in the wrong direction no benefit can be derived.

The Club Mystery

The men who make up the membership of an average club are men of affairs. It has been necessary for them to achieve considerable success in order to afford the initial cost of membership and to assume the burden of its maintenance. Why, then, do they countenance an entirely different procedure in club affairs than the one they pursue in the conduct of their own business?

No good business man proceeds to battle with the highly competitive market of today unless his structure is properly financed. This is a cardinal principle and cannot be overlooked. Why, then, do we have so much club operation which is financed to the point of the purchase of ground and partial provision for building without proper provision for completion of building and the purchase of its necessary equipment? More than one club which could be named by any or all of you has been handicapped by mis-handling of its financing and has hung a weight around the neck of the manager, making successful operation by him an utter impossibility.

Need Manager at Start

When a business man engages in a certain type of business he surrounds himself with competent, experienced people. If he is to operate a department store, he obtains the services of an experienced linen man to buy linens, an experienced furniture man to buy furniture and an experienced carpet man to buy carpets, and so on throughout the entire establishment. Why, then, do clubs elect to build buildings suited for club houses, to pass on kitchen planning, the combination of color schemes, the type of furniture, china, glass and silverware best suited to club service; and in fact the whole building and furnishing scheme without the assistance of someone who is experienced in this type of work

and who is later to be made responsible for its successful management?

When a business man places on the shoulders of an executive a heavy burden he naturally expects to pay a salary commensurate with the responsibilities of this position and many men who are members of your club have turned from their office doors applicants for positions, simply because these applicants placed too low a figure on their services. Why is it, then, that clubs expect to obtain a manager to preside over the destinies of a \$3,000,000.00 investment for \$2,500.00 to \$3,000.00 per year? Again ridiculous, and a condition which in no way measures up to our modern business set up.

The stockholders of a corporation do not attempt to tell the president whom he shall hire or how he shall operate. They look to him for results and for dividends on their holdings. Just so the members of a club—they are stockholders in every sense of the word but are looking for a different return. They expect dividends, to be sure, but the dividends they expect are service and comfort which two go to make up the dividend of pleasure and that is the primary reason for membership in any club, be it town or country.

Granted that club organization is similar to business organization, they should be conducted on much the same principles but do we find this situation obtains? We do not. There is constant interference with a supposedly competent manager by Tom, Dick and Harry, and this immediately proceeds to choke the value of the property to start with and makes secondly for an extremely expensive operation. This type of operation brings about an unpleasant situation at the end of the year in the way of assessments to cover operating expense and I know of nothing so distressing to the ordinary club member as constant assessments to make up for improper management which improper management is usually the result of too much interference in running the club's affairs.

Without any question you thoroughly agree with everything which has been said so far, but some gentleman may be present or may read this article who is interested in the management of a club organization and while he may agree with the criticism, still can rightfully assume the attitude that criticism is of no use in the world unless it is constructive criticism.

(To be concluded in April GOLFDOM)

Producing Bent Turf

REQUIRES

COMMON SENSE Methods of Farming—THAT'S ALL

Remember the story about the old fellow who built a boat? Every one who came in to see him had something to suggest and he followed every suggestion. When the boat was finished he shoved her over in a corner of the yard, and started another. When asked why he did it he replied that the boat over in the corner was everybody's boat and the one he was working on was his own and he was building her to suit himself.

We farmers are inflicted with advice galore from Tom, Dick and Harry—get quantities of "literature" telling us how to "farm." The Department of Agriculture, State Experiment Stations, State Agricultural Departments, Extension Service Departments, Country Agents by the hundreds, all are writing articles and sending out bulletins giving advice and remedies that they consider good for "ailing" agriculture. The facts in the matter are that farmers who really produce your food, long ago came to the conclusion that nine-tenths of the advice originating from persons who know very little about practical agricultural processes did not amount to a "tinker's darn."

Those who have charge of the golf courses of the country also get a lot of "advice" and I do not know but that they are in need of "relief" from some of it as much as we farmers are. Many of the greenskeepers on golf courses are getting "greenskeeping" advice. One "authority" tells him he will be better off if he does a certain thing in a certain way and another equally

good "authority" tells him that he should not do it at all and that is the wrong way anyway, and the greenskeeper is no further ahead in his stock of real information than he would have been if both authorities had kept still on the subject. In other words, not only the greenskeepers but the chairman of the greens committees are often inflicted with such a conglomeration of advice that they actually have very little information available that is valuable in getting down on earth and actually producing and maintaining fine turf on their putting greens and fairways.

I am a farmer. I have made my living, ever since I graduated from college, twenty years ago, from the soil. For eight years I have been increasing my areas devoted to different species of the Bent family of grasses for seed production. I now have under my control more than 3000 acres devoted to fine seed production. I have had to make a success; otherwise I would have gone under years ago and that success has been absolutely dependent on my giving satisfaction to the hundreds of golf clubs whom I have served during those years.

To grow fine turf you must have some practical knowledge of agricultural processes.

I have been through the mill. I believe I am equipped and better qualified from the school of experience to give you practical advice relative to producing a desirable turf than those who do their "farming" from a swivel chair.

Write me your troubles. Tell me what you are up against and I will be with you one hundred per cent.

If you wish to thicken up the turf on your fairways or improve the quality of the turf on your greens, the spring of the year is the best time to sow seed. At this time of the year farmers plant corn, oats and potatoes. Nature is now calling on all living things to reproduce its kind. Weed seeds and undesirable grass seeds that are in the soil are all ready to germinate and start in to grow. Whereas, farmers do not desire weeds with their crops, it is not as necessary to guard against them as it is in fine turf production. When new seedlings are made in the spring of the year, the grass has to compete with its natural enemies—weeds. Thus, it is rather better to make new seedlings in the fall for most of the weed seeds and undesirable grasses have then germinated and are out of the way for the season. However, if the element of time enters in—if your ground is all ready for the seed and you want to play on your course this fall, sow true creeping Bent seed (*Agrostis Stoloniifera*) on your greens, and Rhode Island Bent (*Agrostis Tenuis*) on your fairways. To thicken up existing turf, either on putting greens or fairways, the one best time of the year is to do it when nature calls and that is in the spring.

A. N. PECKHAM

Kingston, Rhode Island

Careful Selection of Site Vital to Course Progress

By EDWARD B. DEARIE, JR.*

EXPERIENCE teaches us that greenkeepers must understand the elements of nature and the greatest difficulty which presents itself to most of them is the varying condition of soil, climate, rainfall and duration of seasons. All have a direct bearing on what results are to be obtained in bringing a new course along.

Such knowledge is invaluable to any greenkeeper. He should acquaint himself with local conditions. Also, he should accustom himself to profit by his experience. What might be right in one place might be the contrary in another. It is a foregone conclusion that the soils of Florida and California, where the climates permit year around play and perpetual growth on greens and fairways, must be organically different from soils in northern and eastern states where the turf is dormant for a considerable portion of the year. It is not to be expected that the geologic conditions of all parts of such an immense country would be the same. Thus, we find abundant reasons for diversity in soils, temperatures, quantity of humidity, quantity of rainfall and duration of seasons. These all offer exceptional opportunities for study. A knowledge of these elements, therefore, is essential to a proper understanding of the principal factors involved in this work of bringing a new course along to a playable condition.

That is why I am not going to outline any definite procedure for conditioning a new course. All I can do is to point out what in my mind seems to be the fundamentals for conditioning a new course for play.

Equally important with the problem of maintenance is one which is absolutely fundamental and vital: That is the proper selection of a

site. There is a tendency to regard the selection of a site and the maintenance of a course thereon as two distinct problems whereas in reality they are part of the same general problem. Many club organizers are overly impressed with scenic beauties and disregard other aspects of the problem—which is the creation of a practical and attractive golf course.

In selecting a site for a golf course attention should be given to topography, soil resources, drainage and water supply. Opinions differ as to the relative importance of these factors but each of them is of great importance. One has only to work in this field in various parts of the country to realize the importance of fundamentals. Many so-called golf courses have been laid out and constructed by laymen and amateur golfers, landscape gardeners and self-styled golf course architects, which are impractical. In some cases men interested in golf course promotion have done the best they knew how to build a course at a cost fixed by the amount of money available. We have in this country a great many golf courses which are as they are—deplorable examples of waste and violations of the sound principles of construction. Such courses are costly to maintain and quite impossible to understand.

"Haste is waste" is perhaps nowhere better illustrated than in this field. Patience is still a virtue in these times when all else seems to be sacrificed to the desire for speed. The attempt to build golf courses on poorly chosen sites is unfortunate. Many locations have not been well chosen with a view to satisfactory maintenance. It is folly not to exercise the greatest care and discrimination to secure proper topography, sufficient acreage, right soil fertility and adequate water supply. In most cases,



Edward B. Dearie, Jr.

*Address before National Greenkeepers' Association.

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too little thought is given to the cost of maintaining the finished course.

A golf course is a permanent or at least a long time investment. The first thing to engage the attention of any club should be the importance of obtaining the right site and sufficient acreage with the proper soil. One cannot overestimate these factors. Many clubs selecting their sites in haste have never been able to correct their initial errors. Vast sums of money have been wasted in an effort to control unconquerable conditions by re-arranging course from time to time in order to attempt to satisfy the members and constantly trying to modify the texture of the soil to provide the proper fertility for the greens. One hears tragic reports of the cost of maintaining such courses from year to year.

Not only have mistakes been made in the past but they are still being made now in the face of the advanced information which we have before us today. For some strange reason it is often thought that almost anyone can choose a golf site or lay-out and build a golf course. Such stupidity more than anything else has been responsible for the incredible waste and difficulty that greenkeepers have to encounter from time to time. It is doubtful if greenkeepers ever will succeed in conditioning poorly chosen courses except at enormous expense. Many newly organized clubs ignore the basic fact that, in order to have a satisfactory golf course, they must secure a suitable tract of land on which to lay it out and grow turf.

Moulding a large acreage into a first class golf course is an expensive matter and once done is not easily altered. It is much cheaper and more economical to secure a suitable site in the first place than it is to rebuild and recondition a course in an unfavorable location. Many club treasuries will bear testimony to this fact. Our need is a crying one for more careful selection of golf course sites and should be emphasized on all possible occasions.

Pick Architect Carefully

Let's survey a little more closely the considerations which should rule when golf courses are being planned. Unquestionably it should be the work of a golf course architect to advise in the selection of a site. The selection of a golf course architect should be given very careful consideration. He should be a man of wide

experience and demonstrated capability in this field. Do not put too much stress on his promises but rather pay more attention to his past performances.

The type of course, whether public or private, and the amount of money available for construction are the two paramount considerations. Economical construction and maintenance are also points of great importance in the selection of a site. Wise is the club which can secure several tracts of land on option and then have the architect go over each one carefully and report to the club which he considers the best, giving his reasons for regarding it as a site for a practical course. Special attention should be given to economical construction, avoiding waste without sacrificing attractiveness.

Nowhere else is the architect more necessary than before the selection of a site and nowhere else will more be required of him. He must be a man of parts with considerable experience to be able to pass judgment on the location, its topography, soil and cost of construction as they are vital to the planning of a new course. Experience has shown that the services of a capable architect, who understands the fundamental principles of course construction and maintenance, will save the club thousands of dollars in upkeep.

The designing of a golf course is an art in itself and it is manifestly impossible to give in a short article all the ramifications of this highly developed work such as topographical surveys, soil charts, drainage plans, principles of hydraulics necessary to irrigation and problems of engineering.

Relation of Building and Care

There is an extremely close relationship between construction and maintenance. This fact is often overlooked. There is a tendency to hire the greenkeeper after the architect has completed his work. This is manifestly unfair. The greenkeeper should be called upon to express his opinion and judgment regarding the cost of maintaining the course before the work is started. There can be no first class golf course unless the turf is of the right quality. The quality of the turf depends upon the quality of the soil. There can be no great satisfaction in courses—no matter how well designed—where the fairways, tees and greens have a poor stand of grass impossible to condition.



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