

Weather, Operating Expenses Hurt

# Pro Total Income Is Up But Profits Are Down

By **HERB GRAFFIS**

**P**RO revenue for 1956 from playing equipment, apparel, lessons, club-cleaning and storage and bag and car rental — will be slightly ahead of 1955, but the pro's net profit for this year is lower.

Professionals who are well informed on the golf business situation in their respective area collaborated again with GOLF-DOM in reviewing the year's business. Estimates, however, may be changed slightly by Christmas business which is becoming a steadily increasing source of revenue to professionals.

Two adverse factors cut down profits: Considerable increase in operating expenses (mainly salaries of assistants and club-cleaning boys); and weather in the spring and early summer which "stunk like hell," according to Bill Dalgety, pres., Central N. Y. PGA, and was just as bad in many other sections as it was in central New York.

The weather knocked down ball sales to an extent that wasn't recouped despite excellent play in summer and early fall and normally good conditions throughout the playing year in a few sections of the pro field. Ball sales at pro shops are expected to run 5 to 7 per cent lower than last year's high figure. Pro ball sales are believed to have suffered less than sales of other retailers.

### Club and Bag Sales Up

Club and bag sales at pro shops will show an increase. Clubs, as near as pro

authorities can estimate, will run about 5 per cent ahead of last year's volume at pro shops. Bags will score about 10 per cent in dollar volume ahead of 1955 sales at pro shops.

Club sales by pros at the larger clubs accounted for most of the increase. Pros at the smaller clubs think that the increase in prices of the top grade clubs is beginning to cramp buying.

Apparel sales seemed to be less affected by weather than sales of playing equipment. Increase in apparel sales was reported by observers in almost all of the 31 PGA sections. Several pro correspondents reported a strong trend toward higher quality, higher-priced apparel in pro shops and the few who commented on the reason for this trend, believe that even with more attention being paid to higher values and prices the pro shop still is selling apparel at lower prices than other first class retailers.

Store competition is reported as about the same as last year in 12 sections, stronger in 10 sections and as an uncertain factor elsewhere.

The competition that really is paining pros is that of the discount houses. Pros admit that this cut-throat competition is brutal to other conventional high class retailers but is murder to the pro who is expected to give considerable free service regardless of his costs.

Trade-in allowances on clubs to a marked degree have offset competition of the discount stores and other retailers and have accounted for a pretty good percentage of sales of top grade new clubs. Trade-ins also have helped a lot to supply juniors and other beginners. The trade-in allowances don't seem to have been as wild this year as in 1955 but still are dangerous.

The 153 new courses opened this year probably represent a greater part of the gain in number of rounds played this year. Play at courses that were closed upon being sold for residential or business sites is reported to have been absorbed by existing courses which now are at convenient capacity.

In every section women's golf play increased this year. As closely as pro authorities can figure, it accounts for about 25 per cent of the total rounds of play which is expected to near 70,000,000 for the year. In several sections women's play is increasing by 50 per cent over last year. Frequently pros reported that about 30 per cent of the play in their districts was by women.

But the volume of women's business at pro shops still hasn't kept pace with the increase in women's play. At only about 20 per cent of the clubs is women's buying at pro shops in line with the extent of their play. Whether this is because a woman doesn't buy golf goods at the rate a man does, or whether the women are buying golf goods elsewhere, isn't clear yet. But more pros are putting more accent on merchandising to women golfers.

Pros' estimate of the amount of business in golf equipment that their players do outside the pro shops ranges from 10 to 50 per cent. The national average, according to reports to GOLFDOM this year, is about 31 per cent. On a dollar-and-cents basis that isn't too far out of line with manufacturers' association figures and the distribution of private, semi-private and public courses.

### Junior Picture Bright

Again, the brightest long range view of the entire pro business picture was junior golf. In almost every section junior golf increased and in no section was a loss in junior play or lessening of junior golf interest reported. Several sections mentioned increases of from 60 to 100 per cent in junior class participation and play over last year.

Only a few pros reported that cost of doing pro shop business in their sections

## Home Pro Appreciation



More than 250 persons gathered at Sylvania CC, Toledo, O., recently to honor Lou Chiapetta, who has been pro there for 19 years, at an appreciation dinner. Lou (at left) slices into a cake while from (l to r), Dr. Norman Mathieson, Sylvania pres., Marty Crompt, Northern Ohio PGA pres. and Harry Moffitt, national PGA pres. study his wrist action.

this year was approximately the same as in 1955. In 27 sections pro department operating costs hiked, sometimes as much as 25 per cent over the previous year. The national average of reported increase in operating costs was 10½ per cent.

Problems that the pro authorities believe will be tough ones in 1957 are:

- Increasing costs of pro operation;
- Difficulty of getting qualified and ambitious assistants who are willing to work for incomes the business can afford to pay;
- Increasing pro department revenue;
- Closer watch of inventories, trade-ins and search for economies that won't decrease standard of service;
- Better display;
- Getting officials to educate members in their reciprocal obligations to the professional;
- Overcoming resistance to higher prices of golf goods;
- Manufacturers' deliveries;
- How far to go with cheaper playing equipment in balancing pro shop stocks.

### Weitzel Dies Following Crash

John Weitzel, 33, Hershey, Pa. pro, died on Sept. 18 from internal injuries suffered nine days before in an automobile accident. Winner of the Pennsylvania Open in 1955 and 1956, Johnny was signed to the Golf-craft advisory staff last spring. He was a Purple Heart veteran of World War II and had been at Hershey CC since 1953.

# Pro, Superintendent Educational Plans Praised by Manufacturers

Manufacturers of playing equipment and course materials and machinery advise that this year will go into the books as one of very good but not record sales volume. The weather generally has been favorable for turf although it slowed ball and club sales until around mid-May.

Manufacturers dealing with the professionals and superintendents say that the standard of operations in both these departments of golf business has continued to show substantial progress.

The educational programs in course maintenance which in recent years have had counterparts in the pro end of the business are praised by the leading manufacturers in golf as great contributions to the game and its players as well as solid foundations for further advance by the businessmen in golf.

## Education to Pay Pros

John Sproul, United States Rubber golf ball sales head, says "The progress of the PGA educational program in establishing the long-desired short course of business schooling for assistants at Dunedin makes golf history.

"During the past several years, since PGA sections have gone in for spring meetings featuring practical business training, the standard of pro merchandising has steadily elevated and the pros' merchandising position has definitely strengthened.

"There are no magic or easy ways any business has found to increase sales volume and command of the market, as successful businessmen professionals well know. The extension of the pro department education for pros and assistants in the enlarged program at Dunedin this winter is a wise and constructive move for assuring greater profits and protection to pro golf business."

What the pros may expect in improved business methods already has been previewed in the course maintenance field.

J. L. (Jim) Holmes of Mallinckrodt Chemical Works remarks "The greater attendance and interest of course superintendents at turf field days and educational conferences is a development accounting

for a marked advance in golf course maintenance standards.

"Not only do the superintendents benefit from lessons learned through controlled research but have opportunities to exchange experiences and ideas with rather large numbers of other superintendents.

"We have had frequent occasions to share in this interchange and use of information during our introduction of a broad spectrum turf fungicide which we believe to be the most important development in golf course maintenance operations this year. The product insures against the misdiagnosis of diseases and is especially valuable when more than one disease is present — which often happens."

## Women's Business to Boom

Vincent Richards, head of Dunlop Tire and Rubber sports dept. comments "The highlight of pro department business this year appears to me to be the growth of pro shop sales to women.

"In discussing this increase with a number of professionals I am impressed by the way the wise fellows are planning to push this trend. I believe that if the weather gives pro business a break in 1957 the smart ones will increase their golf ball sales to women by 50 per cent and have the best year they ever had in this department."

Gurdon Leslie, Manager of the Geneva works of True Temper Corp., is convinced that the golf business is entering a period of tremendous growth. He says:

"Our fiscal year which started May 1, 1955 and ended April 30, 1956 was the second largest year we've had since we began to make steel golf shafts.

"The growing interest men show in golf, plus the phenomenal increase in women and children's golf, lead us to believe the golf market is only a moderate fraction of what it is destined to be.

"It strikes me that the energetic and informed professional will get a large share of the increased golf business and that this share is assured by the constant improvement in pro merchandising of first class equipment.



Members of the committee who are handling arrangements for the National Mixed Foursome Two-Ball amateur championship to be held in Boca Raton, Fla., Feb. 12-16, 1957, recently met in New York to make plans for the event. They are (l to r): Willie Turnesa, Barbara Romack, Polly Riley, J. E. McAuliffe, chmn., Paul Gardner, Mary Ann Downey, Ted B. Shop, Mrs. Phillip Cudone and Carl S. Mengar. Jack Penrose and Dick Chapman, also committee members, were unable to attend the New York meeting.

"I have a definite feeling that a strong effort should be made to interest the member of every club in golf instruction. If the pro would point out that the member has an investment in membership fees and equipment that should be made even more productive of pleasure and health by more time on the lesson and practice tee, I'm sure the response would increase the pro's profits and prestige."

#### Sales Opportunities Abound

Fred J. Bowman, Wilson Sporting Goods Co. pres., points out "There has been no dampening of golf enthusiasm this year in spite of bad weather conditions, at one time or another, over the entire country." He notes that the work of the National Golf Foundation, financed mainly by the foremost makers of clubs and balls, has been instrumental in the building of more than 360 courses in 1954, 1955 and this year, and hundreds of courses are under construction and planned.

On pro market prospects for 1957 Bowman comments:

"The golf professional is at the gateway of golf prosperity — anyone playing golf must more or less go through or pass the pro shop. He has a more or less "captive membership" and that membership has been sold on "pride of ownership on automobiles" but not on their golf clubs — they should get as much or more enjoyment from their golf clubs as they do from their cars!

"Walk through the parking lot of any club — you will see a preponderance of 1956, 1955, etc. models — but very few Model T's.

"Look over your bag rack — note how many hickory shafted clubs — old sheath-

ed shaft clubs — worn out woods — are there. Why? The member has not been 'sold' on the idea that new model clubs will do something for him — and he is 'ripe' for selling, too! And the person best qualified to sell him is the golf professional!

"These members are optimists — or they would not be playing golf — they are always in the market for something new — something that will take a few strokes off their scores.

"Remember, too — these members are getting older — they are prospects for new clubs — different shafts, weights, etc.

"The alert pro knows the conditions of the members clubs — he knows the members' swing — so a suggestion here and there is always in order — (Try the new club — it has a good feel — you will get better hand action,) etc. Get a club in his hands — let him play a round with it before he buys. Nine out of ten will keep the set. If the tenth one should scratch the club a little bit, you can always touch it up.

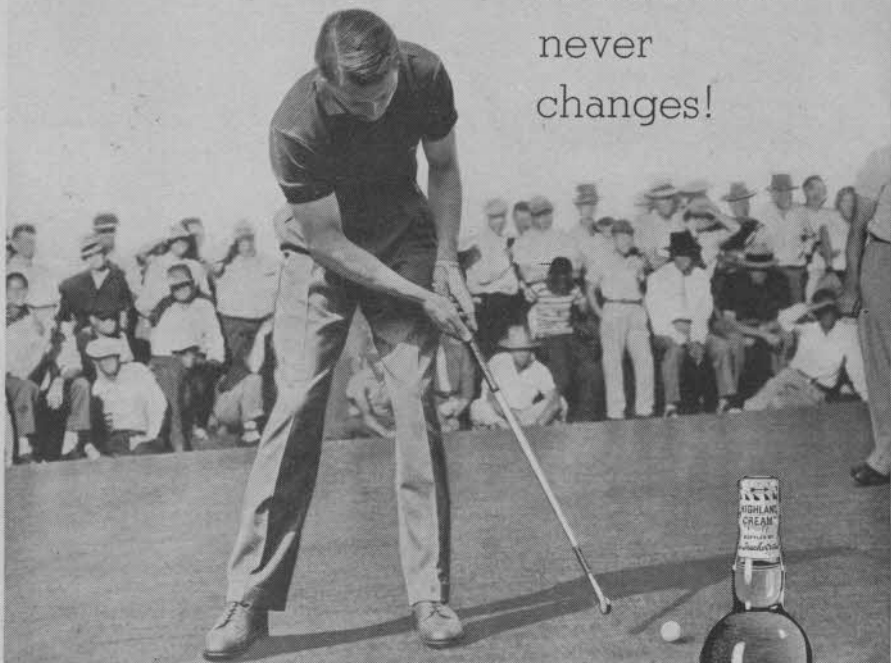
"Have on hand an assortment of clubs in length, weight and shaft flex. Sell the member what he needs.

"Don't overlook the market for golf sundries — umbrellas, shirts, shoes, gloves, hose, rain wear, seat canes, caddy carts, etc. Some of this merchandise is subject to style and color change and must be watched carefully. Should a dozen of them be purchased and eight sold, the pro's profit rests in the four in his inventory. These must be sold if the pro is to make his profit. If the item is a slow seller, the quicker it is sold the better.

"Leading manufacturers are spending millions of dollars on golf advertising and



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but the  
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changes!



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promotion to pre-sell the golfers' equipment. The alert pro should stock equipment that has sales appeal and consumer demand backed by responsible manufacturers.

"Prices on the 1957 line show a very small increase over 1956, even in view of much higher material and labor costs."

#### Lauds Pros As Leaders

Bill Kaiser, mgr., pro dept., Hillerich and Bradsby Co., says "The golf pro business situation continues to show steady and notable progress. The golf pros generally as businessmen rank right along with the best of the smaller retailers — and some of the pros do an annual volume that takes them well out of the 'small business' class.

"Increased sales volume resulting from energetic and advanced display and merchandising, the convenience of the pro's store, his wise selling tie-up with the lesson tee, and hard work have brought the pro increased inventory and credit problems but our experience is that pros are handling these matters with excellent judgment and awareness of the importance of top credit rating.

"The pro is in an enviable position of being able to observe in his members' use of clubs what design and construction features are most suitable for the customers. We have found that adopting the pro's

### 150,000 Xmas Shopping Guides Ordered by Professionals

For the third straight year, GOLF-DOM's "Christmas Shopping at Your Pro Shop" catalog that has been used by pros throughout the country in promoting gift sales volume, is a sell-out.

A total of 150,000 copies of the catalog has been distributed to pros in the last two months, indicating that pro Xmas gift sales again will easily go over the \$1,000,000 mark. In 1954 when 106,000 copies were distributed, and again in 1955, when 135,000 catalogs were supplied, pros realized well over \$1,000,000 in extra gift business that the shopping guide helped to develop. This is the third year the catalog has been published.

"Christmas Shopping at Your Pro Shop" is pro-only in circulation and golf gift merchandising.

### No Golf: Wet Grounds



The Bidston Golf Club course, Birkenhead, Eng., became one big water hazard following heavy rains that swept the island last month. Caddies didn't tote any bags for two or three days following the downpour, but they had fun sloshing around in the water.

suggestions obtained from the close-up of player use has accounted for a highly satisfying increase in business in clubs made especially for pro-shop sale."

#### Pro Business Sturdily Healthy

Henry Cowen, MacGregor Golf pres., a canny observer of the pro business, remarks:

"The golf market in 1956, as the industry's reports undoubtedly will show when released, continued to reflect a high level in both production and sales. In the interest of factual reporting, however, it probably would be less than accurate to predict an all-time peak in this year's volume. Unseasonal weather, rain and cold, prolonged well into late spring and even early summer in many sections of the country, raised havoc with normal anticipated play. Golf ball and lesson revenues particularly declined in these months, but by mid-summer it was apparent that equipment sales of all types had taken an encouraging spurt.

"Pro shop inventories, a matter of serious concern as late even as July, began to move out in healthy fashion, and the evidence points now to no more than the usual seasonal carry-overs on hand consistent with the annual pattern. That this position was attained, considering the penalty for a late start, can be credited to aggressive pro shop merchandising and promotion, intelligent and vigorous effort. Golf professionals who conscientiously and diligently supervised their shop operations should be able to look back on a record of successful accomplishment. The hours were long, and the

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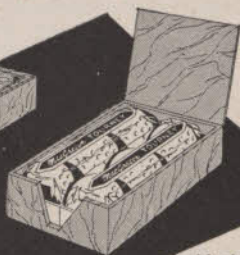
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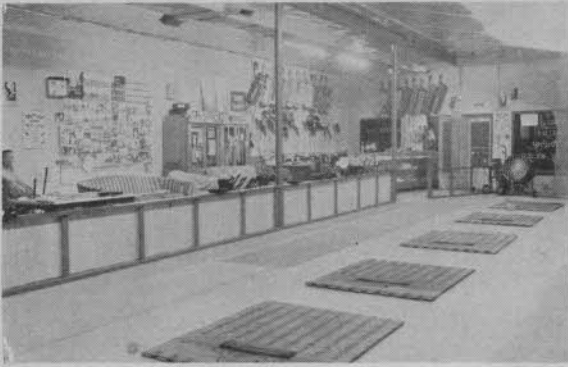
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## Winter Golf in Northern Illinois

Golfers who live in the vicinity of Franklin Park, Ill., a Chicago suburb, can keep sharp during the winter-time by practicing and taking lessons at Lou Esposito's indoor range. Besides the conventional tee facilities, the range also is equipped with a sand trap. At right rear is the pro shop which adjoins a lounge. The indoor range also is air conditioned for summer play.

work arduous, but results were rewarding.

"Prospects for 1957 are bright, but competition for the consumer dollar is equally keen. It scarcely seems feasible to review the various phases of merchandising in any brief resume, but foresighted professionals must continue to keep informed and alert. In short, it is a fair-sized business that most professionals are operating today. As such, success only can be achieved by adopting modern business-like methods of operation.

"Altogether the outlook for the industry in general, and professional golf in particular, is encouraging. Statistics compiled by the National Golf Foundation reveal a nominal but steadily increasing number of participants and a similar continuing gain in golf course facilities. The 4-day work week may not be around the proverbial corner just yet, but the upturn in overall golf activity is significant, and it is reassuring that very real progress is being scored now in expanding the golf market."

### Supts'. Foresight Valuable

Wm. A. Cleary, pres., W. A. Cleary, makers of golf course chemicals, comments that the extremes of heat, cold, moisture, drought and the usual catalog of diseases and pests at the nation's courses during the past two years have directed attention to the professional advancement of course supts.

"Application of research, foresight and preventive methods have enabled supts. to minimize or escape course damage that several years back would have been enormously costly.

"This achievement isn't recognized by the golfing public," Cleary says, "nevertheless it undoubtedly is the most significant development in golf course maintenance since it became a profession instead of a casual and minor sideline of agronomy.

"From now on the supt. must think in terms of prevention of trouble — even that caused by weather — and insure the preservation of excellent playing conditions by materials, machinery and the foresight, skill and research genius of men."

Herbert C. Johnson jr., head of Nadco Sporting Goods Co., takes a bright view of the weather factor that often plagues golf business. Johnson advises more attention to lengthening the golf playing and business season in a lot of the country—a sound suggestion that produced the leaf-cleaning programs that are standard maintenance procedure at many courses and the Christmas golf gift sales campaign by pros.

Says Johnson:

"Although early bad weather in 1956 delayed sales, we noticed that the active selling season lasted four weeks longer this year.

"Shipments from our plant on golf products in the month of July were 64% above July of a year ago. This extension of the season in 1956 may well be a forerunner of what to expect in the future.

"We noticed a very large upswing in golf cart sales in September in that many pros took advantage of the demand for golf carts by people who are still accustomed to using caddies during mid-season, but who needed carts when the boy caddies returned to school. These golfers have extended their playing season because of the golf cart.

"Active Christmas promotions by more and more pros every year are another indication that the selling season can easily be lengthened.

"In 1957, we look forward to a good year, and a longer selling season.

"We believe that every pro should give serious consideration to extending his selling season, eventually with the view to making it a year-round activity."



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**WANTED—Course in perfect condition. Roomy, well kept tees; lush, divot & weed-free fairways; true, dense, if difficult, greens; etc., etc., etc. What do you have? Joe Golfer.**

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## **"Perfect" Course: It's Sum of Artistry, Simple Beauty, Sweat, Ample Budget**

ONE of the many things that complicate a supt's job is lack of agreement on what constitutes "perfect" condition at a golf course.

What one player may regard as "perfect" won't be satisfactory to another. A condition that will please one set of officials and represent a miracle of achievement for the budget available, won't be acceptable to officials the next year.

And, to make the situation more perplexing is the fact that what was "perfect" several years back won't do at all now.

So, to get "perfect" condition defined, GOLFDOM queried a number of outstanding supts, whose ideas of the ideal golf course follow.

One of the perennially young "old masters" of course maintenance takes the view that perfection never can be achieved in conditioning a golf course.

Frank H. Wilson, supt., Charles River CC, Newton Center, Mass., says:

Starting with the supposition that a golfer is never off his game and the fault lies with the course, the perfect condition is out.

Second: To a superintendent his course is never in perfect condition. If he thinks it is he had better quit.

Third: Nature is exceedingly temperamental and good breaks are necessary to accomplish this theoretical perfect condition.

Fourth: A course in perfect condition for what? A national tournament or member play?

Fifth: The question would be better worded "What maintenance practices are necessary to produce a golf course in perfect condition."

Sixth: GOLFDOM is not large enough to cover the subject. Nevertheless here goes, let's play the course:

Tees should be large with more than one tee to a hole. The surface should be smooth and free from depressions. The turf should be of wear-resistant strains of grasses cut slightly shorter than the fairway; about 1/2 in. and well covered.

The tee surface should be soft enough to take a tee peg readily but firm enough to give a solid stance.

Turf should be free from weeds and mechanical blemishes. The markers should be placed at least 12 ft. apart.

Having played our tee shot we are now looking down the fairway the outline of which is pleasingly contoured, with sufficient width from the 150 to the 250 yd. marks to allow for a well hit shot. The

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### **More on This Subject in January GOLFDOM**

In this symposium one group of course maintenance authorities gives its ideas on the "perfect" golf course.

In the next issue of GOLFDOM — January, 1957 — there will be presented the expressions of other noted experts in course maintenance, among them T. M. Baumgardner of Sea Island, Ga., Don McKay of the Hartford (Conn.) CC, Gerald M. Dearie of Medinah Country Club, and E. L. Queen of the Wichita (Ks.) CC.

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turf in the fairway is of sufficient density to hold the ball up well and is free from weeds, clover and divots. The surface of the fairway is free of depressions which give unfair lies. The turf is smoothly cut at a height suitable for play for the particular turf grasses.

Having hooked our ball from the tee into the rough it is readily found due to the fact that it is planted to suitable turf grasses which penalize the next shot, without holding up play.

Our next shot is into a trap. The trap has 7 in. of loose, sharp sand, free of small rocks or pebbles and is well raked. The back of the trap is free from holes and is planted to turf grasses similar to those growing in the rough. The trap is large with room to swing but difficult enough to penalize the shot.

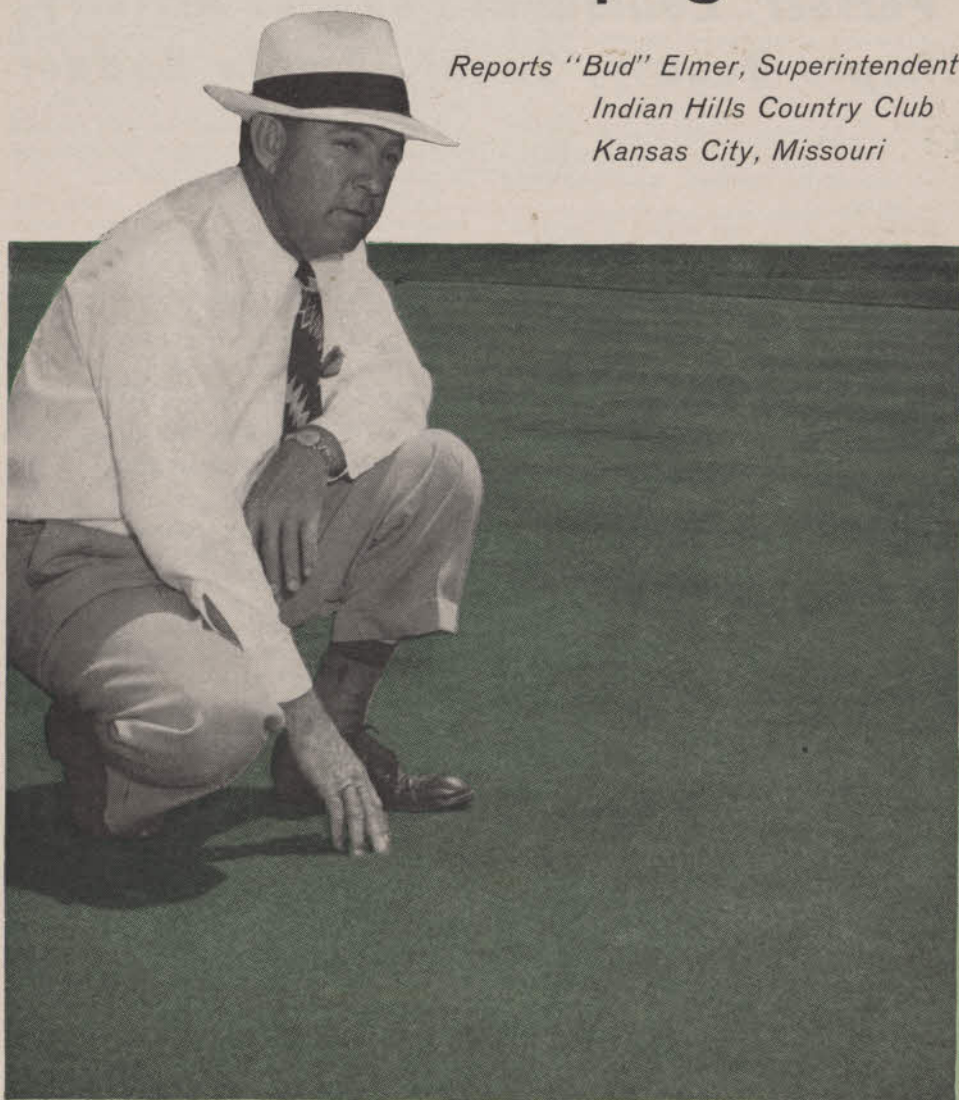
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*Reports "Bud" Elmer, Superintendent  
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