

Happenings, East and West

A report on the Massachusetts State Turf Conference

By Bill Smart

Superintendent, The Powelton Club,
Newburgh, New York

The Chicopee Motor Inn was filled to overflowing on March 5 to 7 for the conference sponsored by the Massachusetts Cooperative Extension, Massachusetts Turf and Lawn Grass Council and the Golf Course Superintendents Assn. of New England.

Opening session started at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, a very sensible move which eliminated the need to stay Tuesday night to catch morning speakers.

Well-traveled Tom Mascaro of West Point Products cited instances whereby lime and top-dressing, light verticutting, drag-matting or watering had stopped the action of disease on greens—notably dollar-spot. More interesting was the information on exudated water (usually thought

of as dew). Under the proper conditions this harmless-looking moisture can be toxic to turf. If there is a high salt index present, a hot water extract from the thatch can be produced, which can kill seedlings and stolens and, at times, mature turf. Normally, rainfall and irrigation keep the situation under natural control.

Rowland Armacost of Waubesa Springs Links was not scheduled to speak, but because the conference was running ahead of time, he did. He described a new cultivator, which is currently being designed by a General Electric engineer and which is said to have advantages over the present-type hollow tine machines. It is not yet in production.

John Spodnik, president of the Golf Course Superintendents Assn. of America, spoke about the growth of golf, commenting

that courses will continue to be built because of player pressure and that the player is becoming more sophisticated. Unfortunately, this sophistication does not apply to his knowledge of the superintendent and his work. Of interest to everyone present, who desire a national conference in the Northeast, was Spodnik's statement that the day was at hand when national conferences must be planned five years in advance.

Dr. Joseph Troll of Massachusetts State College and a member of the planning committee is one of a growing number concerned with the ecology of the turf, specifically the effect on turf of current practices and certain materials. Dr. Gunner, also of Massachusetts State, expounded on this theory.

Dr. John Harper of Pennsylvania

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A report on the Rocky Mt. Golf Management Seminar

By Jerry Claussen

National Golf Foundation Club Planning
Consultant, Lakewood, Colorado

Improved communications has often been cited as a key to executive cooperation and more efficient operation of a golf or country club.

This is the basis for golf's most unique educational program, the Rocky Mt. Golf Management Seminar. The third annual seminar was held March 10 at Pinehurst CC, Littleton, Colo.

Co-sponsors are the National Golf Foundation, Colorado Golf Assn., Colorado Professional Golfers' Assn., Rocky Mt. Golf Course Superintendents Assn., and Mile High Club Managers. The 65 who attended the 1969 seminar had equal representation of superintendents, managers, professionals and others involved in the golf business.

The need for good communications among club owners, members and department heads was emphasized over and over again during the all-day program. Panels discussed how to solve management, golf services and course maintenance problems, including:

- whether a general manager or a trio consisting of manager-professional-superintendent is the best way of running a large club;
- minimum wage law changes and how they affect clubs;
- design of golf shops to best serve golfers;
- advantages of automatic irrigation systems;
- cup settings and other greens management techniques;
- construction and maintenance of golf car paths;
- common mistakes in planning, building and putting new courses into operation;

- programs for training and motivating personnel.

Major speakers included William Bengueyfield, western director, USGA Green Section; Miss Shirley Spork, educational services consultant, NGF; and David Milek, insurance executive.

Some of their key statements:

Bengueyfield—*Most golf courses have been and are being built with little regard for future maintenance. But maintenance should be the most expensive consideration. Good design doesn't compensate for lousy grass.*

Spork—*A good program for junior golfers should include a planned schedule of tournaments, free use of courses for these events, standardized teaching methods, an organization with standardized membership qualifications, written tests on rules and etiquette, a*

Continued on page 90



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INVESTMENT INCOME

Investment income appears now to be a minor problem. The IRS has ruled on many occasions that an exempt club may not receive investment income with a few minor exemptions. When these exceptions do apply we feel that a tax on the income would be appropriate. However, here as with non-member income, the imposition of the tax would obviate the need for the prohibition.

CAPITAL GAINS

We must voice our opposition to the proposal to tax the capital gains of social clubs. We are not aware that this proposal would raise substantial revenues from the Treasury's standpoint, but the amounts from the standpoint of an affected club would be large and in some cases catastrophic.

Capital gains arise infrequently in the industry as a whole. They almost invariably occur when a club sells land as a result of condemnation or economic necessity.

The economic necessity usually

arises when the property tax burden on the club's land becomes too heavy for continued use. Typically our country clubs are subject to the increase in land values which has been a characteristic of our economy for many years. As urban usage spreads to the borders of a country club, its land value will increase dramatically. In most states land is taxed at a value based upon the highest and best use to which the land can be put. If high-rise apartments appear in a club's neighborhood, taxing authorities will value the club's land at the same figure as the apartment developer's land. This causes great increases in taxes—in one example a club which paid \$30,000 for property taxes last year received a bill for \$180,000 for 1969 property taxes.

These drastic tax increases require that the club move to less valuable land. This requires the construction of entirely new facilities and usually requires the club to borrow heavily to augment the land sale proceeds in financing the acquisition of new facilities.

When land is condemned the problem is similar. The club must move and acquire new facilities.

In both these cases the capital gains tax would take away a significant portion of the proceeds and, in some cases, prevent the club from reinstating operations.

A sale of club property is usually a wholly fortuitous event. But, it is an event which is contrary to the preference of the members. They do not move voluntarily; they do not sell their facilities voluntarily. When this event does occur—and it's happening more often—it is always damaging to a club and frequently the damage is irreparable.

SUMMARY

Our position then, is that we do not oppose the principle of the extension of the unrelated business income tax to clubs. We oppose vigorously the imposition of a capital gains tax on the sale of club facilities.

For a comprehensive look at the rising property costs that are plaguing today's country clubs, turn to page 54

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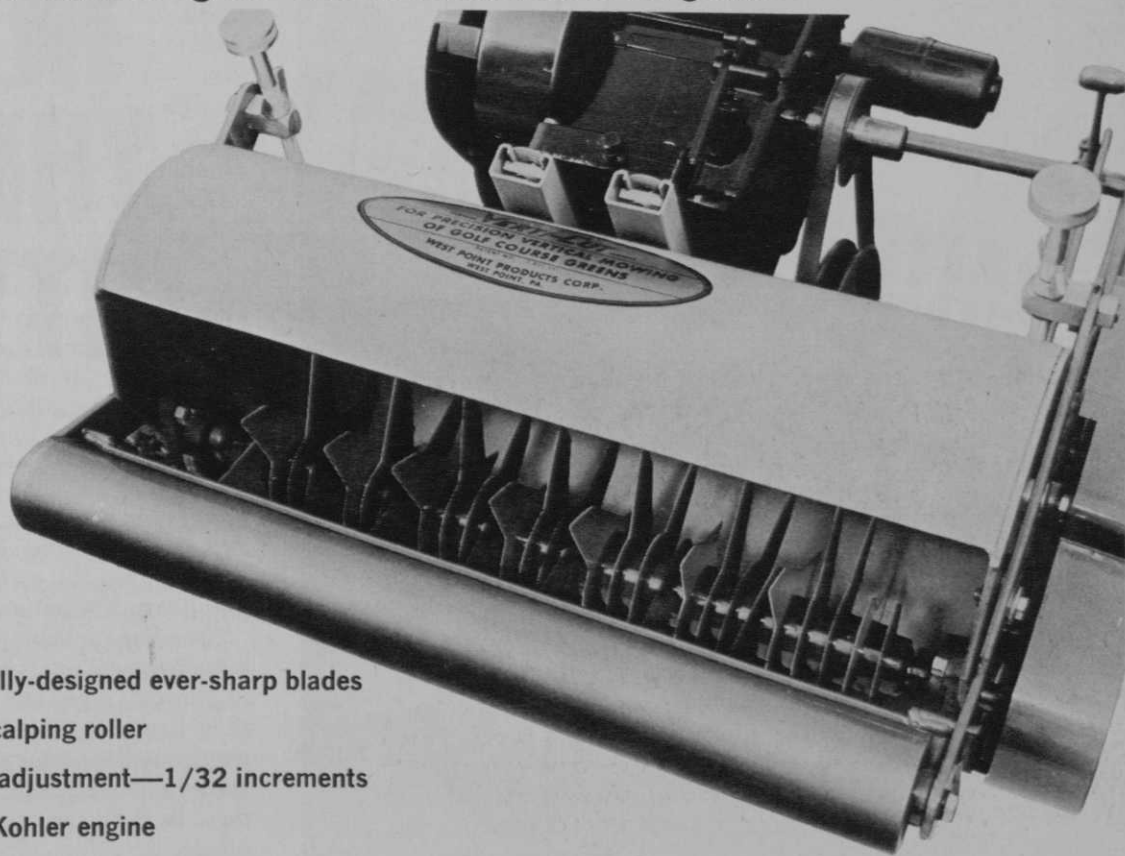
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PRO SHOP IN THE CITY

One time major league baseball player (catcher with six different teams) and present day raconteur and sports announcer Joe Garagiola sharpens his golf game with practice on Manhattan's East Side.

Sound improbable? Not only is it probable, it's convenient! Many of the city's golfers have found they can sharpen their game and get in worthwhile practice sessions in the course of a business day, in the heart of the asphalt jungle.

City pro shops are relative late-comers to the golfing scene. In New York the earliest of the breed arrived on the scene about 25 years ago. Then the business of the city pro shop was golf lessons. The shops were looked upon with some skepticism, and many said instruction indoors was tantamount to no instruction at all.

Despite this criticism, city pro shops not only managed to survive but have flourished and broadened their operations to the point where, today, sales of golf equipment and apparel occupy a place in the city shop that compares favorably to the country club pro shop.

The Town House Golf Club, located at 153 E. 52nd Street in Manhattan, is just that—a golf club and pro shop. Walter Reavely, owner and head pro, offers yearly practice memberships to golfers for a fee of \$100. Members may come into the club and practice whenever they wish.

Golf instruction is a big part of most city operations. Town House, for example, is often booked for 35 to 40 half-hour lessons daily. From lessons come equipment and accessory sales.

"The important thing with people taking lessons in the city has to be that we show we're concerned with how they do. I suppose it's a personal touch, but whatever it is, they keep coming back and keep referring others to us for instruction. That's what keeps us in business," says Reavely.

Another reason that keeps Town House in business is the use of closed-circuit television to study the golfer's swing as he takes a lesson and then show, by instant-replay, how the golfer looks. The instructor can analyze a faulty swing and correct it.

Town House offers the golfer 10 tees on which to practice or take a lesson. Along with this is a putting green and a sand trap to practice the gentle arts of blasting from bunkers and putting. "We try to give the golfer something for every situation he might encounter on the course," says Reavely.

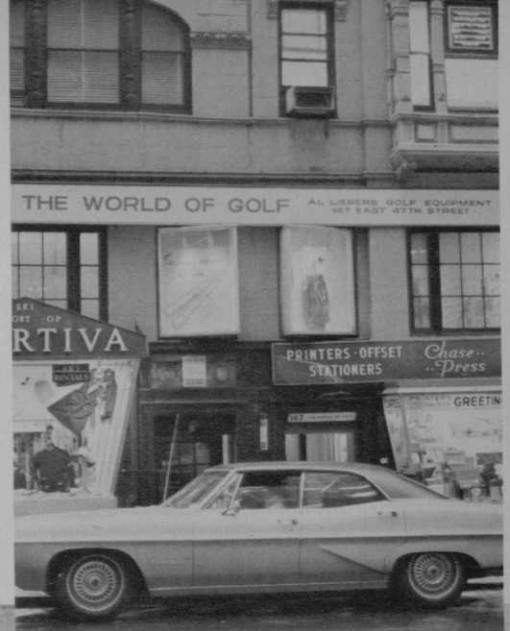


In the equipment field Town House stocks only pro-line merchandise. The shop does a healthy business in clubs and balls and a sizable amount of sales in items of apparel, gloves and shoes. The sell is soft and prices are always maintained at a competitive pro shop level.

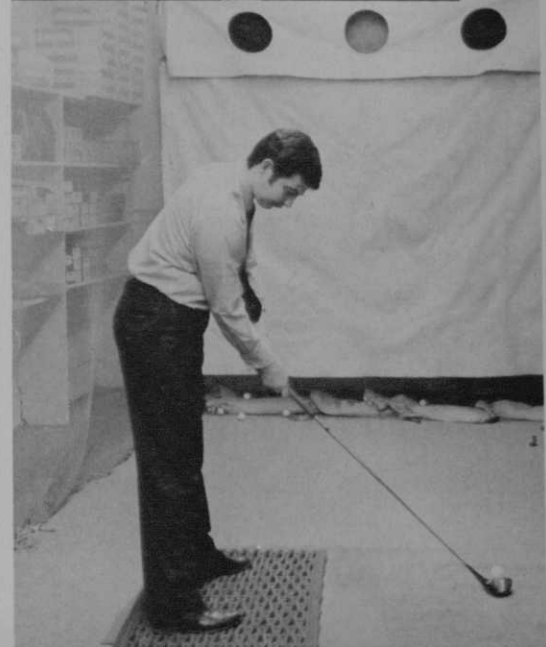
World of Golf, located a flight above street level on E. 47th Street, was opened recently by Frank Malara, Jr., who is also the owner of Al Liebers Golf Equipment Company.

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Amid the mayhem of Times Square, viewed (left) from the Allied Chemical Tower, Sam Sharrow's pro shop is like an oasis. At Sharrow's (fourth from top) and Richard Metz's shop (second from top) businessmen often stop for quick practice sessions during lunch hours. The World of Golf (top and third from top); uses well-lit displays to lure customers in busy city surroundings.



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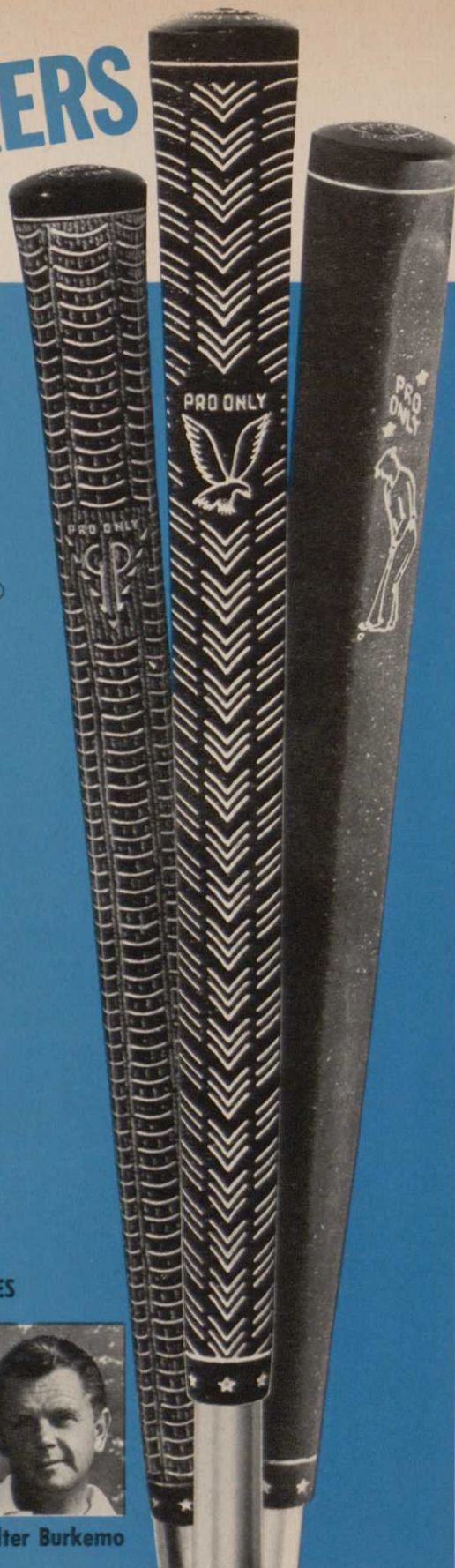
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Pro shop in the city

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Malara moved into the pro shop field as a means of expanding his club business. He decided to open his shop in Manhattan, where the Liebers plant is located and known to many. In mid-1968 he opened for business in a brownstone-type building with a limited amount of advertising and waited to see if the customers would come tripping in. He found that although many knew the quality of his equipment, there was no great influx of customers.

He was set up to give lessons and also allow practice for those who wished it. "We realized we were in the lesson business, but we were looking for bigger movement of the equipment we make. I'm a Professional Golfers' Assn. pro and thought it would only be a matter of letting people know where we are. In the beginning, our traffic just wasn't the kind you boast about. Then we installed the Swing Recorder and things began to look up."

According to Malara, the Swing Recorder takes the guesswork out of club fitting. A machine composed of complicated electronic circuitry takes a photographic record of the golfer as he swings through. It can measure the speed of the clubhead and take a picture of the trajectory of the ball and the ball in flight as it leaves the clubhead.

Like many other in-town pro shops, the World of Golf affords city golfers additional services. For example, golfers may leave a change of clothing on the premises and then drop in during the day for a lesson or whack away at some range balls. They can then shower, change back to street clothes and continue their business day.

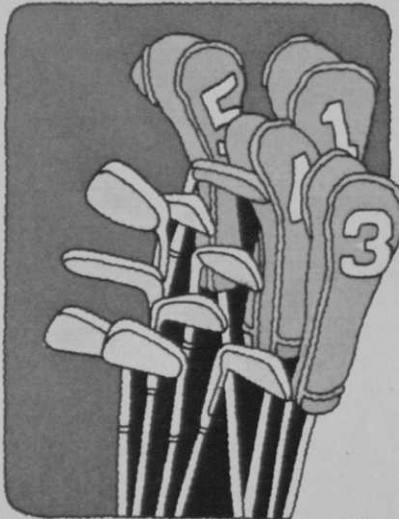
For George Boss of Golf Trading Company the challenges of operating in the city are very different from those Frank Malara cites. "I feel we're right alongside our country cousins in the pro shop

business," he states. "We've got a club here that has what I call 5,000 members."

Golf Trading is located on 35th Street a few doors west of Fifth Avenue. Its one similarity to the World of Golf is its location: one flight above street level in the building it occupies.

"We have nets here for instruction and practice but only about 10 per cent of our business is lessons. We're a pro shop in the merchandising sense of the name. We sell all types of pro-line equipment both new and used along with apparel and other golfing items."

George points out that the lessons given at Golf Trading do eventually convert into pro shop sales and in that respect his busi-



ness is like other city shops. The shop has a full schedule of lessons. Group lessons are a big source of revenue.

In the 10 years the company has been in business George and his partner have worked hard at maintaining an image that is relaxed and relaxing.

"Golf has its own mystique. A golfer wants what he thinks is best for him, and we try not to steer him to something else. I believe honoring the customer's feeling is what has spelled success for us."

"Most pros I've known have failed to make themselves known to their audience. They have a captive audience at their club, but lose out on a lot of business by

remaining aloof from their membership."

Another big part of Golf Trading's business is done in used clubs. One customer has come back to George and traded clubs five times, each time buying a new set and stepping up in class.

The very large number of people who do business with Golf Trading has prompted the partners to launch a subsidiary, Golf Tours, Inc. Golf Tours is designed to do just what the name implies, arrange golf tours, acting as tour director and making all travel and hotel arrangements—done at no additional cost to the golfer. Golf Tours profit comes from the commissionable air fares and hotel accommodations.

A city pro of a different order is Richard Metz, who has only recently entered the pro business on his own. His shop is located on Lexington Avenue between Bloomingdale's and Alexander's.

"I've got a business founded on just one concept," says Metz, "teaching people to play golf or improve their game. And just about all the people who come in here for instruction live in the city."

The shop is two flights above the street and he's added a touch of elegance to the interior with decor that's a combination of wallpaper and wainscoting. Despite the fact that he labors within the shadow of two giant retail operations he sells apparel and equipment through his shop, although admittedly this part of his business is still small.

"Right now about 90 per cent of my business is lessons, but my equipment and apparel sales are increasing every week. As a pro I have to recognize the necessity of this part of my business. A golfer has faith in his pro and will listen to him when it comes to equipment."

Descending from the height above Lexington Avenue and traveling downtown a mile or so over to the West Side, in the vicinity of

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From practice and instruction New York City's pro shops are branching out to offer golfers not only equipment and apparel, but a golf haven