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The
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experience

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kept the shopmasters from locking their doors and heading back to wherever they retreat in the winter-time. Twelve of 20 pros reported club sales as "good"; three others gave them a "good plus" rating; and another three adjudged them the "best they ever had." Only two said they were off from last year. Better balancing of weight in the heel, toe and sole of the irons, and the shifting of weight higher and forward so that it's more in line with the shaft in the woods are said to account for the principal refinements in the 1973 models. These improvements were well advertised and many golfers apparently were impressed by what was said in the copy.

The new graphite shaft! Few people in the Chicago area seem to be getting excited about it. The pros' reply when asked about the shaft was pretty close to a copyrighted, unanimous. "We get a mixed reaction from players who have tried graphite." In the next breath cost is mentioned and then there is a trailing off to the opinion that most people seem to be waiting to see how the shaft is accepted. Only about half of the pros confess to being curious enough about the shaft to have tried it themselves.

Rainwear, surprisingly, wasn't a big seller this spring, undoubtedly because, as two or three pros pointed out, most people were wearing the gear they bought in 1972. However, one top line of waterproof shoe got a big play at several clubs. One Southside pro sold more than 150 pairs, and at another club it was necessary to place three substantial re-orders to meet demand.

As of mid-June golf ball sales were still lagging. A few pros reported they were coming close to catching up as of that date, but generally sales were 10 per cent below what they should have been. The conclusion of one pro is that "you can't lose 15 playing days in May, including three weekends and expect to break any records for the year. All you can do is hope to come out even for the season." There is general concurrence in that statement.

Men's wear sales held up quite well this spring in spite of the weath-

er and slowdown in shop traffic. About half of the pros pronounced their volume as "good" or "satisfactory" and most of the remainder were greatly encouraged by the way it improved after June 1. Doubleknits are beginning to trail off, although one company is credited with coming to the rescue to some extent with its polyester-cotton blend. Shirt sales are nearly as good as can be expected. Slack sales, as of mid-June, were dragging a little, but several pros feel they would have suffered even more if manufacturers hadn't had the foresight to splash them with color, almost to the point of giddiness.

Checkered, erratic, words of this ilk, describe women's sales. "Extra good" to "terrible" cover the pros' summation of them, with the net result being sub-par. As usual, there is the threat of dropping women's wear altogether, but this is heard every year. One pro says the reason he hasn't closed out female attire permanently is that he's afraid it would hurt his other sales. Another points out that if there is any place in which the pro shop gets hurt in competition with downtown stores, it's in the women's line.

However, by mid-June, women's softwear sales were picking up everywhere, but not more than one in five pros was expecting to recoup the lost spring volume. One advantage of the early June spurt is that the summer close-out sale will be pushed back and there won't be as much women's merchandise to dispose of. For the season, this will make the conglomerate net mark-up a little higher.

Matching skirts and pants (hot, that is), a takeoff on the tennis dress, and dress blazers were mentioned by several pros (or their wives) as items that most attracted their women customers.

Lesson business over-all was down at least 10 per cent, a casualty of the weather, but at clubs where the ranges weren't flooded, the volume was reported as good. Bag sales, which don't vary much from season to season, were about the same as they have been in the past. Gloves, headwear and miscellaneous items were down about the same percentage as balls.

It has to be kept in mind that most

pros don't keep close tabs on individual items in the early season, but give their estimates on the basis of total sales figures. However, all have a good top-of-the-head idea of what merchandise is selling well and what is lagging. In some cases, estimates of best selling brands are influenced to some degree by staff affiliation or where soft goods are involved, by the pro's preference for certain lines, but these probably aren't too important. At any rate, if a survey of 20 Chicago area pros doesn't tell the story for the whole country, it probably gives a good indication of the direction in which business is going.

As of the middle of June it was up! Two weeks of the best business many of the pros had ever experienced made them start forgetting the beating they had taken in the spring. All weren't convinced they would make a 100 per cent recovery for the season, but they were in a much better mood than they had been immediately prior to Memorial Day. There wasn't any doubt that there was a lot of business to be had if the weather only held so they could get to it. □

EAST *from page 28*

Rain gear lead all other sales items this year with rain suit, umbrella and rain shoe sales up 50 per cent over last year. Most shops ran out of these items early in the season and neglected to reorder them in anticipation of some dry weather, which never came.

One pro reasoned that the jump in rain shoe sales resulted from upgrading the old crepe soles and generally better workmanship in the functional new \$28 rain shoes over the old \$19 variety. One Long Island pro sells these new shoes at two pair for \$50, a \$6 savings on a two-pair purchase, and says he's sold over 100 pair since March 1st. He added that his regular shoe sales were down by 30 per cent.

Professionals uniformly felt the new investment casting technique in clubhead design had been a great boost to golf club sales. "It's just a lot easier to sell clubs that have a new 'wrinkle' that members see. It can make a difference," says a North Carolina pro.

There was less enthusiasm for the

continued on page 54

by CHUCK CUMMING

The Profit Pro Shop

YOUR ATTITUDE IS IMPORTANT

Merchandising in the pro shop incorporates a great many jobs. One of the hardest of these is tuning yourself and your employees in on customer relations and customer attitudes. This phase of advertising, merchandising and selling is, or could be, the difference between your shop being a mediocre business or a successful business.

Every golf course has people. No two golf courses has people of the same temperament, living scale, and so on. To adjust yourself to dealing with the president of a large company, a doctor, a lawyer or a candlestick maker, means that you have to project yourself to him in a sincere way so that your willingness to do business with him, to be his friend and to help him with his golf game and select appropriate equipment comes through.

There are hundreds of golf clubs and categories of private country clubs where the golf professional must know every member by name. This idea is good regardless of what type of club you are associated with. If you are one of the few who can associate people with their correct names every time you see them, you are fortunate. If you have a hard time remembering names, I would suggest taking a memory course of which there are always several located in most large cities, or you can subscribe to a correspondence course. It can really pay off for you in the long run. You know yourself how nice it is to have a sales person address you by name. It is a little personal touch and is the first step in making a sale.

All golf professionals, because of the nature of their business, make lasting friendships with a few of their members. This is natural. We must realize, however, that a good golf professional must be friends with everyone, even the chronic

fault-finding member for whom nothing seems to be satisfactory. How hard it is to be nice to a man or woman who is always giving you hell for a mistake or who is naturally over-demanding. It takes a good man to smile and try to satisfy an irate customer. When you can do this, you have made a friend, you have a customer who will sing your praises to every other member. It is not always easy to do. I know from my own experience that when we goof on a customer's order once and try to rectify the mistake, we just seem to make one mistake after another. This does nothing but aggravate the situation and an already-irritated professional, and it also irritates the sales department. Nothing goes right and it seems to get worse and worse. Once we correct things, though, we have a friend. A golf professional must do the same.

One of the hardest things you and your assistants have to do is make up your minds that satisfying an irate customer is worth your time. Remember, you were hired by the club to be a golf professional to every member. When you have turned the irate customer into a satisfied customer, you have taken another step toward doing the job you were hired to do.

If you are employed at a semi-private or municipal golf course or if you own your own golf course, the approach may be different. If your customer is paying daily green fees, you can afford to tell the player to take his golf and his business someplace else, but you really haven't given you or your customer any type of service or satisfaction when you do this.

So far this sounds as if the fault were the customer's. Not true. A golf professional can't stay on an even keel day after day any more than a customer or member can. A professional who gets up grouchy

can really be a bearcat in the shop the rest of the day. A lot of professionals get rid of this "down" feeling by hitting a bucket of golf balls or by giving a lesson or just by getting away from the shop for a few hours. If I have had a particularly bad day, I compensate for it by doing a lot of work, either physical work, if possible, or paperwork. Anything that I can put my mind to and that allows me to completely forget my sales job for a few hours. This method helps me. Because all of us are different, each of us must find his own method of relieving tension. It is surprising what hard work can do and how it can change one's perspective on the whole day.

A few pointers in transforming your dissatisfied customer into a satisfied customer.

1. Listen to his or her story or complaint;
2. Rectify this mistake or complaint as soon as you possibly can. Make your adjustments on equipment at once. If it is the manufacturer's fault get in touch with him or his sales representative immediately;
3. Do not lie to your customer;
4. If the item must be returned to the manufacturer, do so at once and notify the customer that you have returned the merchandise. Also notify him as soon as the item has been repaired or replaced;
5. If the complaint does not cover equipment, talk to your customer, so that you can iron out any differences between you. Remember, if you can talk to him, you can rectify any error on his part or your part, but if nothing is done, the sore will only fester and become blown out of proportion;
6. Remember, a smile is worth a thousand words.

If you become more conscious of your attitude toward different kinds of people, they will respond to you as a friend and as a customer, if you allow them. □

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF "DOWNTOWN" COMPETITION

GOLFDOM's sleuthing of the "downtown" competition reveals a surprising lack of expertise. Pros also might do some local detective work

by DOUGLAS LUTZ

"Know anything about these things?" the rather portly gentleman on my left, sounding more than slightly frustrated, addressed himself to me. Muttering annoyances, he fumbled through a rack of literally hundreds of woods, wedges, irons and putters. One of New York City's major department stores was clearing house.

Half-heartedly my fellow shopper lifted a driver, then a three-wood from the rack. When I capsuled the differences between driver and fairway wood, he thanked me and glanced around the nicely arranged 20 by 40-foot rectangle set aside for

a golf shop in the store's sporting goods department.

"Seems to me they oughta have a salesman around here. Someone who knows something about golf. Someone who can give us some help," he mumbled as he stalked off and disappeared on the down escalator.

Actually, there was someone to help: a very confused young lady,

who was having difficulty with a display cabinet lock. Her frustrated customer, interested in a dozen golf balls, shifted impatiently from foot to foot. He tapped out an annoyed staccato on the glass counter top with his plastic charge card. Meanwhile, another young man idly ex-

continued



"There was someone to help: a confused young lady who was having difficulty with a display cabinet lock."

DOWNTOWN *continued*

amined price tags on vinyl golf bags. Unapproached by any salesman, he, too, wondered off to lose himself among soft goods racks nearby.

This typical department store golf shop scene did not take place on a gloomy Tuesday morning around 11 a.m., when one might expect a skeleton force to be in attendance. It was a Saturday. The store was full of eager shoppers.

Recently, I scouted the "downtown" competition, the discount scene and the golf equipment supermarkets. My detective forays were to determine what, if anything, was being offered beyond reduced prices. Were there lessons to be learned from retail sales techniques that might prove valuable in the pro shop? Is an unaffiliated golfer in safe hands when being advised by salesmen in retail stores? In fact, does the sales force handling volume sales have any expertise with which to field questions from undecided golfers? In reverse, what is the reaction of the retailer to professionals? Does he view them as the competition?

Specifics were used to determine the degree of expertise the potential customer might expect in a retail situation. The keys were shaft flex, swing weight, club length, construction of clubhead and type of shaft, degree of wood face loft, ball compression and why leather grips as opposed to rubber or vice versa. Simple, commonplace terminology in any pro shop. A foreign language, I found out, in many retail outlets!

In one instance I was told swing weight was the process by which your weight shifted during your swing. And how did that relate to the club itself? The club? No relation at all. If you swing correctly your weight just redistributes itself, was offered as a definition.

In another situation in a highway discount house on Long Island, which is strategically located in an area where there are a minimum of 20 golf courses within 10 miles of the store, the salesman defined swing weight as the ratio between relative heaviness of the irons. The most swing weight was given to the sand wedge, because of its heavy flange. This same outlet dodged

questions on what shaft flex I might consider and did they recommend lightweight steel or carbon shafts. A feeling of relief was obvious when I suggested that perhaps I should talk with a golf pro and then return.

Conversely, one of New York City's ancient and famous sporting goods companies was able to offer skilled professional help. They knew all the answers and were more than willing to explain everything to this "novice." This old, established firm has experts in all fields, but is not competition for the golf professional in the usual sense. They are not a discount store. Occasional sales are featured, of course, but rarely, if ever, a line of discounted merchandise. In fact, in many instances, the local area professionals can easily undersell this mercantile giant. Their house brands in hard goods can easily compete with offerings at the pro shops. Certainly, in the retail business, they are unique.

Recently, one of the city's largest discount sporting goods stores initiated professional help in several departments. They have even taken their message of this new service to local television in an ad campaign encouraging viewer inquiry. There are mixed feelings about the need for such service, because "off the street" trade is brisk, space is limited and too much time may be needed to clinch individual sales. Turnover is the key to profits in this supermarket situation. Merchandise tends to move itself, because most golf shoppers are bargain hunters who come in predetermined to buy.

One fault of retail outlets is lack of individual attention. Yet many unaffiliated golfers not used to dealing with a professional when making hard goods purchases prefer to be left alone to finger price tags and waggle woods, even if they frequently do not have enough room in which to take a full swing. Because their principal motivation is in saving money, they don't want a lecture on swing weight, shaft flex or length. They don't want the embarrassment of deciding against the professional's advice because the price tag may be too high. It's a contradiction, but nevertheless that's how it works. As one manager in the golf/tennis section of a sporting goods store said recently,

"The average duffer feels he knows more than the average salesman. Up against a pro, though, he knows he's outclassed. He's embarrassed. Most of the pros I know expect their customers to have blind faith in what they're saying. Any guy with dough to spend or a charge card burning in his wallet is an easy sale for us. We just leave him alone. He'll buy. There's such a thing as being too helpful, which I think a lot of pros are."

Observing first hand the selling practices at the retail level may provide some clues to sales success. And some devices to be avoided.

Retail salesmen always seem to know the magic moment to step in, ready to wrap up your purchases. Spotting the buyer among the browsers is a technique retail salesmen have developed into a science. They can sniff out a commission. In many operations, it's called closing. It may require only a few words confirming the buyer's choice, expanding his ego by concurring with his decisions. That a golfer may be leaving the store laden with a set of golf clubs completely contrary to his build and ability usually is of little consequence to the seller.

In determining further whether or not any expert knowledge was available, I queried several sales people on length of shaft best suited to my size. Should I use a longer or shorter than standard length?

Out of my own frustration I was tempted to explain why it might be important to know that a driver's length had a direct relationship to the golfer's stature whenever I encountered a blank stare or a fumbling apology. While length of shaft didn't throw too many clerks (most understood the question, but could not offer any suggestions or recommendations beyond finding something comfortable), any query about the degree of loft caused panic. The fact that the slope of a club face might be measurable and important escaped most retail clerks. A few scurried around checking box labels in hopes of finding some magic numbers to report on.

Opinions varied greatly as to what ball compression might best suit my game. Wisely, most retail salesmen skirted the issue. Of the 14 queries on this subject only three

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non-profit status: WHEN IS IT A DRAWBACK?

This third article in a series, which explores the impact that a change in the tax-exempt status would have on a club, studies the financial point at which a club may consider dropping its exempt status

by JACK JANETATOS LEGAL COUNSEL, NATIONAL CLUB ASSN.

Private clubs pay out a large amount of money to meet various kinds of taxes. Real estate taxes levied by state and local governments probably are the biggest; payroll taxes and retail sales taxes continually drain money away from clubs and their members and impose administrative burdens on clubs. The Federal income tax is the smallest paid by a club (for most, no substantial amount of tax is ever paid), yet the complexity imposed upon the management of clubs by this tax exceeds all the others put together.

The member-owned club usually is organized as a non-profit corporation and is governed by a board and a set of officers chosen by and from among the members. This type of club is the most numerous in the industry, comprising roughly 95 per cent of the membership of the National Club Assn. The majority of these clubs are exempted from Federal income taxes by law.

EARLY INFORMALITY

From the beginning of the passage of the Federal income tax in the early part of this century, golf clubs have enjoyed this exemption, first founded in an informal policy set by the Internal Revenue Service, which permitted clubs simply to ignore the new law. It grew quickly in importance, however, and by 1916, it became necessary for

Congress to formalize the exemption. They did this by including golf clubs in the list of types of exempt organizations. That list now contains 18 separate categories describing about 35 types of exempt organizations.

The statutory exemption for clubs is simply phrased to include "clubs organized and operated exclusively for pleasure, recreation and other non-profitable purposes, no part of the net earnings of which inures to the benefit of any private shareholder." This seeming simplicity was expanded over the years by the IRS, which has issued about 45 published rulings for the guidance of clubs. The ensuing complexity of the law has come about because the IRS has single-mindedly tried to hold to an absolute minimum the amount of non-member participation in a club's activities. Its concern is that clubs will sell goods and services to non-members at a profit and that tax-free profit will fall naturally into the hands of the members in one form or another. Usually, this profit takes the form of lower member dues. This, says the IRS, is "inurement" of net earnings and is specifically prohibited by the statute.

About 10 years ago, the IRS promulgated the now-famous 5 per cent rule to control non-member business. The thrust of the rule is to provide a "safe harbor" for clubs that earn 5 per cent or less of their

total gross receipts from non-members. Those clubs that do not hold down their outside business to this safe level risk losing exempt status, if they are found to be "doing business with the general public." Because no one has been able to figure out the meaning of that phrase, a rule of thumb developed: If a club is between 5 and 10 per cent, it keeps its exemption if it can demonstrate that it had some good, non-profit motive for exceeding the guideline; if it goes over 10 per cent, it loses its exemption.

Perhaps, all this doesn't sound too complicated, but every year the IRS national office in Washington decides about two dozen cases. The clubs involved spend a lot of time and money on the procedures, and the IRS has had to make decisions using vague standards. Club officials are faced with an unhappy situation: they must determine daily what is or isn't outside business and refuse non-member business, an unpleasant duty; and members must fill out irritating forms whenever they entertain a party of more than eight people.

For the same reason that non-member business is restricted, loss of exemption can result from earning too much investment income. Idle cash in a savings account and a "rainy day fund" kept in bank certificates of deposit produce investment income. So does a building fund invested in corpo-

continued

NON-PROFIT *continued*

rate or Government securities. This passive income came tax free to an exempt club, and the IRS had to impose a prohibition to prevent "inurement." How much is too much investment income and what effect differing circumstances may have on the result is even vaguer than the rules on outside business.

UNRELATED BUSINESS INCOME TAXED

More than 20 years ago, Congress imposed a tax on the unrelated business income of some exempt organizations. The classic example of the type of abuse needing correction was the tax exempt university that owned a macaroni company. Clubs were not subject to this tax for reasons more historical than logical. Then Congress passed the massive Tax Reform Act of 1969, curing this historical accident by extending the unrelated business tax to include clubs as well as all other exempt organizations. Under this new law, all profits on non-member business and investment income are taxed.

Before the passage of the Tax Reform Act, profits from member income, non-member income and investment were not taxed. Now that the act is in effect, profits from member income remain tax free, but profits from non-member income and investment income are taxed. It would seem logical that the imposition of the tax would remove the requirement for limiting non-member business and investment income. But this didn't happen when the act was passed. As an incidental matter, though, Congress now is considering increasing the 5 per cent rule to 15 per cent and imposing a 10 per cent guideline limit on investment income.

Even before the first draft of the 1969 act was published as a proposal, Congress foresaw the obvious loophole. An exempt club would set its prices to produce a profit on non-member business and anticipate being taxed. Looking at the financial statement, though, the club could see that over-all it was operating at a loss or at best it was breaking even. If the club gave up its exemption, it could take its

loss on membership operations from its profits on non-member operations, show no taxable income and pay no tax. Congress never allowed that loophole to come into existence.

As part of the Tax Reform Act, a provision was included to disallow deductions related to membership activity in excess of income from membership activity. Thus, no matter how much loss a club incurs in membership activity, the loss cannot be written off against non-member activity and a non-exempt club remains taxable on its non-member profits and its investment income. The result of all of this? Parity—the exempt club is treated the same as the non-exempt club, with some differences. These differences are worth examining in deciding how much a

	Taxable club	Tax-exempt club
Proceeds of sale	\$500,000	\$500,000
Expenses of sale	35,000	35,000
Amount realized	465,000	465,000
Basis in land	10,000	10,000
Gain realized	455,000	455,000
Gain recognized	455,000	-0-
Tax rate	.30	.30
Federal income tax on sale	136,500	-0-
After tax profit on sale	318,500	455,000

club's exempt status is worth.

The first difference is that the exempt club has a \$1,000 specific exclusion from income. That comes off the top and represents a tax savings of probably only \$220, but depending upon the bracket, \$480 as a maximum. As a matter of judgement, one may conclude that this difference is insubstantial and will not have any significant importance in any decision making process.

A more significant difference is the ability of an exempt club to sell property without paying capital gains tax. A taxable club is an ordinary corporate taxpayer (except for the limitation on deductions discussed previously) and pays a tax on capital gains at a 30 per cent rate. The difference, then, can be substantial.

The relief from the capital gains tax for an exempt club is somewhat narrow. First, it applies only to the sale of property used in the exempt function, such as land and buildings. It does not apply to invest-

ment assets, such as securities or rental property. Second, the proceeds of the sale must be reinvested in property used in the exempt function within three years. When these restrictions are met, and it is usually not difficult to comply, the capital gain on the sale need not be recognized.

For example, suppose a club, which has 100 acres of land surrounding its golf course, determines that holding the land is an intolerable burden. The land is sold then in one parcel to a housing developer with architectural restrictions ensuring appropriate development. Assume a cost of \$100 an acre when purchased 20 years ago. The sale price is \$5,000 per acre to the developer. Below is a comparative calculation of the Federal tax impact:

The difference is simple and apparent. The taxable club paid \$136,500 in taxes; the tax exempt club paid nothing. The exempt club now has nearly one-half million dollars available, but it is restricted. The money must be put to use within three years. The taxable club can use its money, nearly one-third million dollars, for anything it wishes, including reducing dues or absorbing a loss from operations. If the exempt club had plans to spend \$155,000 per year on capital improvements whether the land was sold or not, it has no difficult judgment to make. The problem arises only if the exemption forces reinvestment in a manner and at a time contrary to the club's desires.

Despite this judgement factor, it seems clear that tax exemption has some value from the potentiality of the tax-free sale. The quantification of that value is difficult. It will depend primarily upon the probability of any sale of assets. If it seems unlikely that any sale could ever occur, then the value would be

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FROM WATER PROBLEM TO RESOURCE ASSET

by GORDON SMITH

PUBLIC INFORMATION SPECIALIST
USDA SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE



The Orleans CC in northern Vermont, with help from the Soil Conservation Service, turned a multi-faceted water problem into a resource asset

Beadle (left, above) and Dunbar in initial stage of digging new irrigation pond. Fairway (left) was swampy before the drain tiles were installed.

Too much water or not enough water. Most golf courses experience one or the other as a problem. For the Orleans CC, near Orleans in northern Vermont, the problem was not either/or; this course had both problems simultaneously. One part of the 18-hole course usually was too dry while another part had developed unexpected water hazards on the fairways.

Although wet and dry land problems are not uncommon in New England's glacier-ravaged hills, it is unusual when both problems butt each other.

Seven of the 18 fairways had been built on sandy soil, which acted as a sieve, resulting in dry conditions. Yet the other 11 holes, spread out over clayey soil, developed water hazards because clay, naturally, retains water.

The original nine-hole course was built in the 1920s over an old country fairgrounds site. The flat meadow was ideally suited for the development of the new course, and six holes were laid out on the open plateau. Three holes doglegged through an adjoining wood.

The dry soil presented problems even to those early golfers, but still the course was considered one of the better ones in the area.

The Depression, followed by World War II, precluded the club's management from starting an expansion of the course until the early 1950s. At that time, a growing membership and increasingly lucrative tourist trade forced club officials to act on the longstanding plans to expand and improve the course.

One of their first moves was to become a co-operator with the Orleans County Natural Resource Conservation District. This move made the club eligible for technical conservation planning assistance from the United States Department of Agriculture Conservation Service. Roger Beadle and Herb Dunbar, SCS technicians for Orleans County, worked with the club's green committee in planning numerous improvements to the land and of water resources.

The club purchased a new tract of land upon which was constructed nine new holes. Also, the clubhouse was modernized. These projects mo-

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Jackson Hole Golf Club, Jackson Hole, Wyo.
Chimney Rock Golf Course, Napa, Calif.
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Bend Golf Club, Bend, Oregon (2nd 9)
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Grass Valley, Calif.

For more information circle number 179 on card

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nopolized the interest of the committee and the finances of the club for the next few years.

With the arrival of a new professional, Al Bontempo, who took over the management of the grounds, a concerted conservation effort took shape. Bontempo, working with Dunbar, began extensive plans to relieve the soggy fairway problem and to irrigate the dry, desert regions of the course.

"You could see a line across the course," recalls Bontempo. "One side of the line was brown and dry. The other side had fairways that looked like lakes after every rain."

Inadequate drainage was cited by Bontempo and Dunbar as the villain responsible for the problems. They devised a plan to install sample tile drain as a first step, mainly to convince club officials of the feasibility of the plan. A 300-foot tile line was designed and installed in one of the wet areas. The immediate result was obvious, even better than predicted.

Says Bontempo, "The improvement was so dramatic that the club immediately voted to lay more drain tile."

Over the next three years, 7,450 feet of tile was installed on parts of seven fairways. The 17th fairway typified the operation. Here, 1,475 feet of tile was installed nearly the entire length of the fairway. With a trench dug 4½ feet deep, gravel was spread six inches deep to form a filter for the perforated tile line. The six-inch tile ran downhill from a point at the upper end of the 18th fairway, across the 17th fairway to outlet into a small pond in front of the 17th tee. A series of four-inch lateral drains ran at angles to the main line to pick up underground water in all the wet parts of the fairways. With the pipe laid, the ditch refilled and the sod replaced, the fairway was ready for golfers in a few days. Six other fairways in the near future will get similar drainage systems.

"Before the tile drainage job, the wet fairway was usually too soft to mow for several days after a rain," says Bontempo. "Now we can drive a truckload of rocks over these areas with no trouble."

About 2,000 feet of tile still is

needed to complete the drainage job, according to Dunbar. That is scheduled to be installed over the next few years.

Cost estimates for the entire drainage job come to about \$10,000. An investment that is well worth it, say club officials.

While solving the wetland problem, the club was simultaneously working out plans to get water to the dry fairways. The small pond near the 17th tee was enlarged to double its water-holding capacity for irrigation. The 17th fairway tile drain furnished part of the water supply needed to keep the pond filled. As a side benefit, the enlarged pond offered a bigger challenge to golfers' games.

To add to the water supply, Dunbar designed a one-acre pond in a wooded area beyond the 15th green. This impoundment now stores 1¼ million gallons of irrigation water. Trout have now been stocked in the pond as an added recreational feature for members.

The two irrigation ponds are linked with an underground pipe system that can reach any of the dry parts of the course. Actually, water that was causing a wet fairway problem on part of the course is being siphoned off to keep the other part of the course green.

"Before we had this irrigation water, we had to use the town's water system," says Bontempo. "This public supply was costly and usually restricted, especially in dry periods when we needed it most. Now, we have more than enough water for irrigation."

The new pond cost \$5,000. The irrigation bill was \$60,000. This, plus the tile drainage work, represents a lot of money; but club officials feel that, pro-rated over a few years, the club actually will benefit because of increased use of the course by members as well as reduced operational and maintenance expenses.

Reflecting on the improvements, Bontempo says, "Our conservation work has changed our Orleans club from a marginal course into one of the best in northern New England. With a \$30-a-year membership fee, this has to be one of the best bargains in the golfing world today." □



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WATER IS NO HAZARD-ALMOST



AFTER



BEFORE

Do men play golf on a river bottom? Hardly; at least not unless your name is Novel B. James and you live in land-hungry Southern California

by PENELOPE HARRELL

Several years ago Novel B. James leased a solid waste dump from the City of Santa Ana in Southern California. On it he built a modest nine-hole course. When River View GC quickly grew to within 10 per cent of its saturation point, the owner looked around for room to expand. The only available open space adjacent to the course was the summer dry bed of the Santa Ana River—not exactly a choice location.

James took the chance, however, ignoring those who questioned his action. Today he presides over a unique 18-hole, par 70 course, which challenges skilled golfers and supplements the county's coffers.

The feasibility of this imaginative location was substantiated when James consulted the Army Corps of Engineers, the Orange County Flood Control District and the Orange County Board of Supervisors.

The county readily leased the non-revenue producing riverbed acreage until the year 2011 for a minimum of \$2,400 a year plus a percentage of profits. It also assesses taxes on this property.

The Flood Control District placed one restriction upon the course design: A 300-foot wide water bottom must be preserved. Thus, no tree or shrub can be planted closer than

150 feet to the center line and elevated greens must not interfere with the water flow.

A hydraulics engineer advised grading a 60-foot wide channel through the center of the riverbed, digging the channel one foot lower than the natural bottom. This channel should sufficiently handle all but the very worst flooding.

Rainfall in this area is expected between October and March 15 annually. Based on previous precipitation statistics, it is predicted the course will be unplayable for not more than six weeks a season. During this time, however, golfers play the nine holes not located in the riverbed. As the water line drops after a rain, 12 bridges across the river permit play on the additional nine to resume at the earliest time.

Management is undaunted by the threat of a 35-year flood cycle. They say that the moderate flooding in 1969, which destroyed backyards and swimming pools on a tributary a half mile away, would have left their elevated greens unscathed. And, they anticipate, the bermudagrass on the fairways will prove to be an effective erosion deterrent.

The sandy riverbed proved ideal for golf course construction. Rock removal was all but unnecessary,

and the sandy soil provides such excellent drainage that salt accumulation is non-existent. With generous irrigation and fertilization, the bermuda fairways and bent greens thrive. The superintendent feels that the riverbed turf, once established, is much easier to maintain than the turf on the original nine holes.

The anticipated problem with silt has been handled by planting 1,000 linear feet of pasture grass upstream to filter out any sediment, which might otherwise wash onto the course.

Out of necessity, all sand traps are placed on the elevated greens. During construction, it was noted that the bare earth utility roads absorbed much more moisture than the abutting turf and when they were subjected to even the slightest water flow, the moisture caused the adjacent grass to peel back.

Now, if the creek doesn't rise, River View GC should turn a profit on the \$250,000 investment within three years. Who knows, by then James may have a plan to turn the neighborhood lemonade stand into a restaurant-cocktail lounge to complement his log cabin clubhouse. □

PENELOPE HARRELL is an ex-legal secretary turned free-lance writer.