

rather stay in the pro shop than go out on the practice tee. When it comes to naming names, the professionals who make these accusations won't do it—tact and diplomacy are involved—and, too, much of what they hear about some of their fellow professionals avoiding the teaching range comes from a second-hand source.

The economics of the things can't be ignored. Can a shop operator who has from \$20,000 to \$40,000 tied up in stock afford much time to teaching, which nets him around \$2,500 a year? With his substantial investment, doesn't good business sense dictate that he devote most of his time to merchandising? Or, such time that he doesn't have to give to scheduling and running club tournament events in return for the retainer he is paid? With his normally fully occupied day, in which he often buzzes around for 10 or 12 hours handling an oddment of jobs (which he never could account for on a time sheet), isn't the head professional justified in assigning most of the teaching load to his assistant?

Quite a few head professionals are doing this. Not the full load but the larger share of it. They say they have no other choice. Asked if they are charged by the membership with shirking responsibility by passing off the teaching program to their assistants, most head professionals say they aren't. The old prejudice against being taught by an assistant no longer prevails at most clubs. At many places, the assistant may be a better player than the head professional; so there is the presumption that he is a better teacher. Another thing that is often presumed is that, because the assistant is lately graduated from the PGA finishing school, he is perhaps privy to more up-to-date teaching methods than the man for whom he works. Going back to the prejudice theory, as many players as not at the typical country club prefer to take lessons from the assistant rather than from the head professional. This generally can be said of women and high handicap players. It is perhaps because so many of them are shy about displaying their swings or games for the

head man. Another factor that may result in the assistant getting more teaching time is that his fee is around \$2 less per hour than that of the head professional.

All this doesn't mean that the assistant professionals have taken over the lesson range. A recent survey of 20 Chicago District professionals indicates that the Number Two man is doing somewhere close to 50 per cent of the teaching work. At a majority of clubs, it seems that the assistant has his following among the members just as the head professional has his. After these are established, there isn't too much crossing over. Once a player becomes accustomed to the teaching style of either an assistant or the head professional, he is reluctant to make a change in his instructor. The lesson continuity factor also plays a strong part in going along with the same teacher.

Professionals have a mercenary motive in getting their assistants into teaching. The latter's salaries can be partially defrayed from the fees they pick up on the lesson tee. An ideal arrangement is to keep the assistant busy giving lessons in the morning and early afternoon hours, filling in the not necessarily Tuesday through Friday "dead" time, but the non-revenue producing time. At some clubs this is done to a rather surprisingly large degree by giving lessons to people who don't belong to the club. This is referred to as "walk-in" business, but in almost cases it is done through reservation. Not too many years ago, one well-known teaching professional developed such a large volume among his non-member following that a halt finally had to be called. It got to the point that it was almost impossible for members to reserve time with him on the lesson tee.

Considering that there is at least four or five hours "dead" time each day in a pro shop operation at a private club, it is a kind of curious thing that lesson-giving isn't promoted more than it is. Usually, the lesson reservation book is kept out on the counter near the cash register where everyone can see it, and the familiar "Lessons by Appointment" sign is conspicuously (but not always) displayed. Some shops

post their rates. But that is as far as it goes. It has always been that way, even back in the days when our old professional was laboring on the range from eight to 10 hours a day. "We didn't have to promote lesson business," says this man. "People knew we were there to teach."

Now, nobody knows why lesson giving isn't promoted. "It's traditional," says one professional. "One of those things that nobody does." Frank Witt, who has been at Cress Creek CC in Naperville, Ill., for a decade maintains that lesson revenue is the most stable thing about a pro operation. "You can count on netting about the same amount every year, whether times are good or bad," he says. "Members will take a given quota of lessons and that's it. I give almost exactly the same number of lessons now as I did in my third year here. It hasn't changed."

However, another professional, who has been at his club in a Northern Chicago suburb for six years, has more than doubled his lesson revenue since he took over. In 1972, he and an assistant both grossed around \$5,000 on the teaching range. How does he do it? To start with, he is at a club where a lot of golf is played. He feels that statistics prove that earnings from lessons are directly proportional to rounds played at a club. But heavy play won't guarantee success unless lessons are solicited. Solicitation is as simple as suggesting a lesson or series of them when a player comes into the shop and starts discussing his problems. "A pro has to be ready to jump on these openings," says this man. "Probably most of them don't. They say try this or try that and let it go at that. They miss the cue to suggest a lesson. You don't have to be a downright mercenary about it, but you have to be alert to the possibility that this person wants a lesson."

"Teaching," adds this professional, "is important for job security. And nobody will ever convince me that the practice range isn't the starting point for a high percentage of sales."

The weather, if nothing else, curtailed lesson giving at Chicago District clubs in 1972, but professionals in general aren't willing to

*continued*

**RETAILER/TEACHER** *continued*

concede that lesson business was off from the previous season by as much as the national average of 11.9 per cent, as indicated in GOLFDOM's survey (February issue, p. 29). The decline was in the neighborhood of 5 per cent in the Chicago area. However, the range between the rise and decline in lesson giving was wider than it may have been in a long, long time—up in a few cases to around 10 per cent and down in another, isolated one to 20 per cent. More professionals than not said their lesson volume was a little lower than it had been the previous year.

Conversely, sales of merchandise have been rising steadily, capping with a 24.7 per cent increase in 1972 over 1971. These percentages would make one wonder just how much emphasis lesson-giving should receive.

Lesson giving in the southern part of the District, which wasn't too hard hit by rain last season, was as good or better than it had ever been. However, in the north and west sector, where as many as 20 to 40 playings days were lost due to the weather, business naturally was off. Lost lesson giving time, though, wasn't in anything like direct proportion to lost playing time. Several professionals report that on days when the course was closed, it was still possible to use the practice range. A scattering of professionals say they managed to jam in a lot of lessons in 1972 by spending more time on the teaching tee than they normally do when the weather is right.

Some professionals feel that if they had had indoor facilities last year, their lesson business wouldn't have suffered. But at clubs where they have facilities for teaching under roof, professionals say this isn't necessarily so. In the summertime people don't like to practice or take lessons indoors. They want to be outside where they can see the ball fly, if only 125 or 150 yards out, and not plop into a net. Except for low handicap players, who are more concerned with making contact than getting distance, club members are more receptive to teaching when it done outdoors.

GOLFDOM'S survey shows that in-

come from lessons at private clubs averaged only \$1,700 in 1972, down from \$2,000 the previous year. These are, of course, national averages and reflect revenue at many locations much smaller than typical Chicago District clubs. Most Chicago professionals said that they thought the average would be at least \$2,500. They based their estimates on a \$10 minimum fee and at least 250 teaching hours per club per year. About three out of four Chicago professionals estimate that they and their assistants teach a total of 400 hours and some put the figure at 500. The instruction fee for head professionals is in the \$12 to \$13 per hour range and is from \$2 to \$3 lower for assistants.

None of the Chicago District professionals who were surveyed uses video in teaching. One reason is that the camera, monitor and tape combination costs in the neighborhood of \$1,500 and, except in only a few instances, it isn't thought that teaching revenue are large enough to justify that kind of an expenditure. A second reason for not introducing video is that most practice ranges aren't equipped with electrical outlets. However, about one out of four professionals report that they used movie cameras from time to time in helping their pupils to study and improve their swings.

None of the 20 Chicago District professionals whom GOLFDOM queried is willing to concede that he personally is a "merchant" prince; as charged by the aging contemporary. There has been vast changes in pro shop operations since he came on the scene 25 or 35 years ago, something that he himself has had to recognize and swing over to, otherwise he wouldn't still be in the business. Nobody can say whether the changes have improved the game, but there is no question that members and players have dictated them. Maybe the oldtimer should take the view that while the modern professional is giving golfers the elegant merchandise and fashionable pro shops they want, he isn't neglecting the teaching side of the game. It may be slightly diminished from what it was years ago, but few golfers have detected this or are complaining about it. □

**GRAFFIS** *from page 8*

Acres (Fla.) CC two courses. Vach formerly was at Golden Gate CC, near Naples... *Mike Kahler* now pro at Sioux Falls, S.C., Westward Ho CC, succeeding Paul Wilcox.

How soon do replaced divots grow enough to repair their scars? Not nearly quickly enough, according to our observation over many years and courses.

The Japanese have the best way of repairing divots. The woman caddies carry little bags of soil fertilizer and seed that they apply to the divot scar promptly after it's made. This protects following players against bad lies. The divot soon is grown over. Daily divot repair in the severely scarred areas is standard operating procedure at most courses, but that shouldn't relieve a player of the obligation to temporarily replace the turf he hacked out or of repairing the depressions he's made on greens.

*Ken Johnson* from Colville, Wash., Elks CC to pro post at Sun Dance CC near Spokane.

Some superintendents are concerned that the recent lag in new course building is sharply diminishing the field for turf management school graduates, yet golf architects have plenty of business.

Modern Talking Picture Service, 2323 New Hyde Park Rd., New Hyde Park, N.Y., will loan free to clubs movies of Masters, Bob Hope Classics and Kemper Open tournament.

Club Managers Assn. of America is getting along faster than the Golf Course Superintendents Assn. of America and the Professional Golfers' Assn. in getting its members "certified" as formally meeting top job requirements.

*Bill Simmons* named professional and golf director at The Hamlet, Delray Beach, Fla. Joe Lee owns the course. Simmons moved from Connongate GC, Orlando, Fla., also owned by Lee.

*Hubie Smith* resigns pro job at Arnold Center GC, Tullahoma, Tenn., to be director of the \$500,000 World Open at Pinehurst (N.C.) CC in November this year.

*Bob von Hage* and *Bruce Devlin* designing second course for Sapphire Valley Inn, N.C.; also another for Doral at Miami. □

by CHUCK CUMMING

# The Profit Pro Shop

## WILL THERE BE A GOLF PROFESSIONAL?

I recently returned from the West Coast where I had the opportunity to visit with golf professionals in several different levels of shops, from the country club shop to the municipal golf course operator to the professional who runs a downtown pro shop. Interestingly, in each case the professional was concerned about his particular operation. The concern was not centered on what equipment or soft goods he could sell, but how long it would be before he was eliminated from the golf business as a professional.

First, let's look at the golf professional. He must be on the job early to take care of the member who wants to play early and he must stay until the last player is off the course. He must finance and sell his own inventory, hire and train his own assistants. He must handle all the tournaments at his club. He has to cater to the whims of his members and still be sharp enough to attend the meetings of the board of directors that night. He, simply, must be in top physical and mental condition to withstand the pressures of the "game."

It is no wonder that excellent young men reject the job of professional in favor of other forms of employment. If the golf industry would take a good hard look at itself, it wouldn't lose the young man who wants to be a golf professional, and the professional wouldn't be wondering how long he will be around or if the profession itself isn't a dying art as far as merchandising and being a club professional is concerned.

We see daily the claims of the sporting goods retailer in advertisements in local newspapers and other publications—proclaiming how much cheaper; how much larger his inventory is than that in the pro shop and how much easier it is to buy at his store than at the pro shop.

All the rhetoric is geared to con-

vince the public that the "downtown" store is better, or at least able to supply the golfer with all he needs.

Do we see the professional fighting back to protect himself against this oncoming wave of merchandising? No. As a rule, we hear the same tired complaint, "I can't compete with the 'downtown' store."

I have been on both sides of the fence, having sold both retail and professional. I know also that up until the past couple of years, the "downtown" retailer was afraid to handle the same golf merchandise as the pro, because he knew he couldn't sell \$100 golf bags, \$300 sets of golf clubs, \$15 a dozen golf balls, nor could he supply free golf lessons or the air of camaraderie found at the golf course. He always was shying away from competing directly with the golf professional. That is no longer the case.

The retailer not only wants to compete for your member, he is offering him all kinds of inducements to come into his store to buy his golf equipment. This is your member he is after. Because of the professional's passivity, the "downtown" retailer has progressed. He now gives lessons with the purchase of a new set of clubs and he has a qualified teaching instructor. He sells golf balls for whatever price the market will bear. He helps customers select the proper clubs. In fact, he does everything the golf professional does, and in too many cases, won't do. In some cases, he is doing it better than the golf professional.

All is not lost, however—yet. The golf professional can fight back, but if he is to progress he must do all or at least some of the following:

1. Be a better buyer;
2. Be a better organizer;
3. Be a better idea man;
4. Be a better teacher;
5. Be a better public relations man with his members;
6. Be a better advertising executive;

7. Be a trainer of your assistants;
8. Be prepared to compete in the field of merchandising;
9. Be a learner and a doer;
10. Be an offensive fighter.

One of the advantages the golf professional has over the retail store operator is his "captive" consumers. I believe that 80 per cent of all the members of a golf club would buy from their golf professional if they were asked to do so by the professional.

Let's say the club has 400 members. That doesn't mean the professional has only 400 potential buyers. He has many, many more. The average family belonging to a country club numbers about three. All are eligible buyers. Now, you have 1,200 potentially captive buyers. Show me a retailer who wouldn't give his right arm to have 1,200 captive buyers walking into his store.

The problem then arises, do you have, or have you purchased, the correct merchandise for your members? If merchandising were just a matter of stocking golf equipment, the job would be easy. But it becomes more complicated when soft goods lines are added, which must be "right" for the male and female members as well as their children. You must also carry tennis equipment and soft goods, if your club doesn't have a tennis professional. If the club has a swimming pool, then the professional must stock swim trunks and other swimming apparel and accessories.

You must know everything about every piece of merchandise you sell. What is the content of a golf shirt, will it wash, does it have to be ironed? How many colors does it come in? Can you re-order? How many smalls, mediums, how many larges should you buy? All these and many other questions must be answered.

### ASSISTANTS CAN HELP, TOO

If you employ an assistant, he, too must know the answers. Never blame an assistant when he makes

*continued*

**CUMMING** *continued*

an error selling the merchandise that you have purchased, if you haven't taught him how to sell it. Remember, you heard the salesman's pitch, you were sold on the item. Tell your assistants why you bought it, what the correct selling tools are and then you will have an eager salesman who will make you money.

All too often the professional feels he is wasting his time by training an assistant because he will leave or be after the professional's job. Yes, he will leave. That you can count on. But if you have done your job well in training him, you will be adding another fine golf professional to the ranks of the industry. Gary Wiren, the educational director of the Professional Golfers' Assn., has told me this many times and has tried to bring this out in the PGA business schools, that if the golf industry is to succeed and the PGA to grow, both have to develop assistant golf professionals.

As for getting your job, if that did happen, you for some reason or another, left yourself wide open

for a change in employment, but not because you did a good job in bringing along your assistant.

Let's examine now what you should be asking yourself about teaching a young assistant.

1. Do you explain what you want done in the shop? A job description, written out in black and white, will make it easier for the young man to know exactly what you expect of him. It also makes it easier for you to evaluate his performance.

2. What is a job description? It should include how much time you want him to spend on teaching, how much on buying, on selling, on cleaning clubs, putting away carts, selling golf bags and equipment and on the many other small jobs that have to be done.

3. Try to give your assistant a chance to express himself. Turn over to him the merchandising of soft goods for two weeks. Let him do what he wants with your merchandise, but with your advice. Chances are you will find he has some fine ideas himself. By implementing a few of his ideas he gains confidence and you gain be-

cause you can do a better merchandising job.

The man working in your shop is the best asset you have to compete with the "downtown" stores. Make your assistant a part of your team and you will not have to worry about the question, "Will there be a golf professional?" □

**ABOUT THE COLUMN**

"The Profit Pro Shop," beginning with this issue of GOLFDOM, will cover a wide range of subjects and will try to provide "something for everyone," as Chuck Cumming puts it. Topics for the future include: how to save money by buying, keeping records and training good assistants; how to better merchandise your golf shop; cooperative buying; pro-only merchandise; advertising in the golf shop; customer attitude and golf salesmen.

We welcome your views and ideas for future topics pertaining to pro shop selling. Write Chuck Cumming, c/o GOLFDOM, 235 East 45th Street, New York, N.Y. 10016.



CHUCK CUMMING has been working in the golf industry for 25 years, beginning as a salesman for Wilson Sporting Goods and leaving that company as branch manager to become national sales manager of Charles A. Eaton Co. and on to his present position of national sales manager of the Double Eagle Professional Div., of Ajay Enterprises Corp.

He has been a consultant for various companies in the golf industry, has given over 150 lectures on pro shop merchandising to PGA sections and assistant business schools, has been on different committees on merchandising and is a past president of the Golf Manufacturers & Distributors Assn.

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# GETTING PROFESSIONALS FOR THE PROFESSIONALS

For years, officials of the Professional Golfers' Assn. have been urging PGA sections to get their administrative and business affairs in order by setting up permanent headquarter offices, staffed with some full-time secretarial and office personnel. Several sections have taken this good advice, and their investments have been paid back many times over in greater operational efficiency.

The Northern Ohio Section, however, recently went several steps beyond the national association's advice. They engaged J. Edwin Carter, Inc., to act as consultants and to handle their business and tournament activities. J. Edwin Carter, president of the Cleveland-based firm, is also tournament director for this year's PGA National Championship at Canterbury GC.

The section's arrangement with the company is more than simply "buying" the services of business professionals. In terms of the relationship between the two organizations, it has some of the earmarks of a merger. The Carter Company and the section's headquarters, for example, will be located in the same building. Carter and Fred P. Koehler, a vice president of the Carter organization, also will carry titles of executive director and executive secretary, respectively, of the Northern Ohio PGA Section.

The unusual nature of this arrangement raised so many questions that GOLFDOM was prompted to contact Duff Lawrence, secretary of the section and head professional at Canterbury GC. Lawrence was instrumental in the arrangement throughout the planning and negotiating stages.

GOLFDOM: Has your arrangement with J. Edwin Carter been in the works for a long time?

LAWRENCE: The recent marriage of J. Edwin Carter, Inc., with the Northern Ohio Section is a fairly new development. We have been working with the company for two or three months, trying to come up with a workable solution and a contract that would be agreeable to both parties. This contract went into effect as of February 1.

GOLFDOM: What prompted the move?

LAWRENCE: A need was felt by the golf professionals in northern Ohio to have a management firm actually run, develop and organize all

professional's job responsibilities have increased considerably in the last 10 years. The most active period for the Northern Ohio Section occurs during spring and summer, approximately from April through September. However, this also is the time the golf professional is most involved at his own club; he, obviously, cannot keep on top of things going on in his section.

It became apparent that the only viable solution to this situation would be to hire a management firm to take over administrative and other matters that we have been negligent in. Fortunately, J. Edwin Carter, Inc., is here in Cleveland to run the PGA Championship this August, and they have offices set up here in Cleveland, so this type of relationship has worked out very well for us. We hope that it can continue on a long-term basis.

GOLFDOM: How is the organizational structure set up under the new arrangement?

LAWRENCE: Carter personally will be responsible for contacts with potential sponsors. Mrs. Carter will engage in doing the financial and bookkeeping duties on a day-to-day basis. Also, at their disposal is a staff of four secretaries to be of service to Fred Koehler, who will coordinate the bulk of the sectional affairs.

GOLFDOM: How does the arrangement affect the professional's place in sectional affairs and the policy-making function?

LAWRENCE: This will not eliminate the golf professional's role in his appointed sectional offices. We have an executive committee consisting of 12 men. Our current officers are George P. Bellino, who is



Duff Lawrence

the section's activities. These certainly would include all administration and secretarial work. The section needed someone to be able to efficiently and professionally run our organization, the whole basic structure, from administration to membership to education to our golf tournament program. The golf

*continued*

## PROFESSIONALS *continued*

president; myself, and Cliff Cook Sr., is treasurer. We also have legal counsel represented by William Balyeat and Oliver A. Thompson.

Another interesting note: We've hired Bill Nichols, who is the basketball and golf sportswriter for the Cleveland Plain Dealer to act as our media liaison. He will write our golf articles and see that all the pertinent information during the year involving the PGA and golf is disseminated through the proper media.

**GOLFDOM:** Has the move necessitated changes in the physical set up of your headquarters?

**LAWRENCE:** We have rented office space in a building with J. Edwin Carter, Inc., in East Cleveland, and we hope to run all our business out of it. We hope also that it will be the focal point of all our sectional activities. The proximity of the office in the Cleveland area, we feel, suits the greatest percentage of professionals in northern Ohio, because about 75 per cent of the member professionals live within a 25-mile radius of Cleveland.

**GOLFDOM:** What benefits do you think will come out of the arrangement?

**LAWRENCE:** We feel very excited about this new association. The Carter company will be able to utilize their professional techniques to help us create a better image in the community and a more efficient and disciplined organization. There are about 400 golf professionals in the section. With the continued paperwork and the complexities of running this type of an organization, it's obvious that the days of operating out of the trunk of the car or skipping from one professional's office to another, depending on who the officers were at the time, had to stop, if we were going to survive and have any type of organization at all.

In essence, you could say that we hired a professional management team to run our organization. They are golf-oriented; they've been involved in golf and golf-related activities since the inception of their organization.

**GOLFDOM:** Have any other PGA sections considered following

your lead?

**LAWRENCE:** I think it's common knowledge that a few sections now have headquarter offices with executive directors and secretaries. We just have gone further. Maybe our approach is a more progressive one; we do have the Carter people handling the majority of the responsible activities of the section. Our tournament program is active and exciting, but takes a lot of time to organize. We have secretaries at our disposal who can handle the bulk of the day-to-day correspondence. This frees Carter and Koehler so that they can spend their time dealing with the more significant duties within their capacities. In the future all sections eventually will have to come to some type of arrangement such as we have if they intend to keep pace with the changing times and keep their organization traveling consistent with the national office. The national organization is only as strong as its individual section. We would like to feel that we would be a leader in this area. Hopefully, we will be able to develop a very strong organization that not only can handle the golf professionals' needs, but also help in the development and promotion of golf.

**GOLFDOM:** What does this arrangement mean to sectional costs?

**LAWRENCE:** The financing of something like this is done through our dues structure. Most of the membership is quite willing to pay, say, an additional \$50 a year for this service. It only makes good sense. After all, everyone benefits from both a better internal and external structure. The \$50 cost is negligible compared to the results that can be realized by the formation of such an arrangement. □

## PROFESSIONALS

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(See page 32K for tips)



CENTRAL PLAINS TURFGRASS FOUNDATION FIELD DAY, Minor Park, Kansas City, Mo., May 8.

FLORIDA NURSERYMEN AND GROWERS ASSN., The Breakers Hotel, Palm Beach, Fla., May 17-19.

CLUB MANAGERS ASSN. OF AMERICA CONTINUING EXECUTIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM, Food and Beverage Management, Chicago, May 21-23.

TURFGRASS FIELD DAY, Western Washington Research and Extension Center, Puyallup, Wash., May 23.

CMAA CONTINUING EXECUTIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM, Club Law and Internal Control, Vancouver, B.C., June 4-6.

RUTGERS TURFGRASS RESEARCH DAY, Dudley and College Farm Roads, College of Agriculture and Environmental Science, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J., June 12.

INTERNATIONAL SHADE TREE CONFERENCE, Hotel Utah, Salt Lake City, June 17-20.

TEXAS TURFGRASS FIELD DAYS, Agronomy Field Lab, Texas A & M University, College Station, Tex., June 27.

FOURTH ANNUAL SOUTH CAROLINA TURFGRASS CONFERENCE, Clemson House, Clemson, S.C., July 10-11.

CMAA CONTINUING EXECUTIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM, Advanced Management Techniques, Denver, July 16-18.

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY TURFGRASS FIELD DAY, Columbus, Ohio, August 7.

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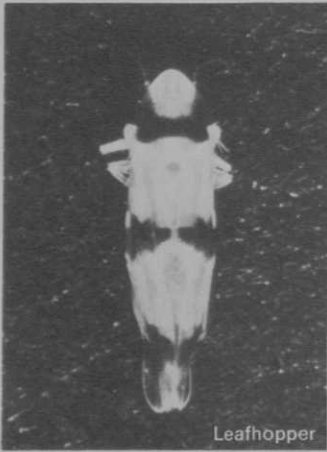
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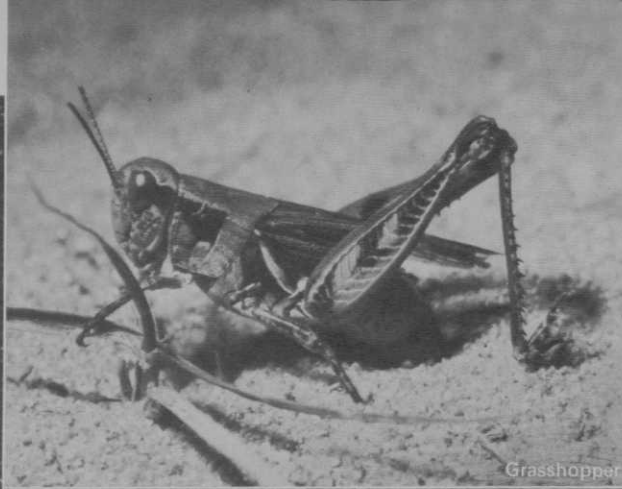
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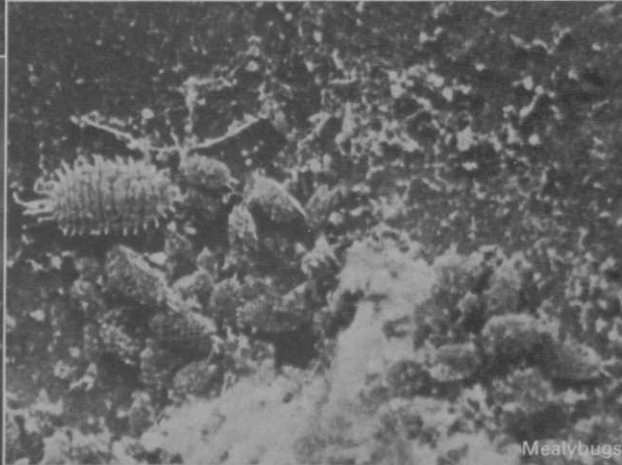
Grasshopper



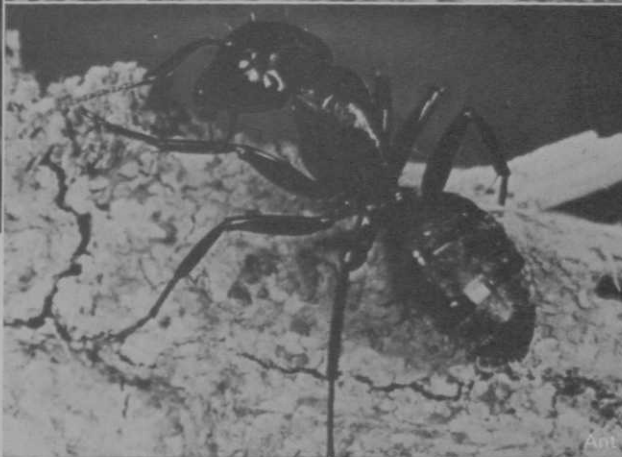
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# THE UNDEFINED ROLE OF ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

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## THE SCENE

Reporting to the budget committee in the board room on October 16, Bill Jones, superintendent of Wayside CC, continued: "The grounds staff for fiscal '73, beginning December 1, will consist of four full-time employees, two part-time (summer) high-school seniors and two undergraduate, two-year students specializing in turf management, one from Penn State, the other from the Stockbridge School, University of Massachusetts. Both will be with us starting April 1. They will be provided room and board, occupying the room over the pro shop. To round out our knowledgeable and experienced crew, Ron Hilger will complete his second year with us as my assistant before moving on to a job of his own next year."

This last statement prompted a question from the new young and aggressive board member, Harry Sommers, a very successful banker as well as low handicap golfer. "Why are we placing so much emphasis on the selection of turf students for members of our crew? Wasn't young Hilger capable of getting his own golf course upon graduation? Is he necessary? And those two turf students trainees who will live over the pro shop and

The proper training of assistant superintendents, argues the author, is one guarantee for the future that quality will prevail on the golf course. And the responsibility for this important function rests squarely with today's head superintendents and club officials

by WARREN BIDWELL

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eat at the club, isn't that costing the club money?"

It would seem that Sommers had fed all of these rapid-fire questions into a computer and now was ready for the readout. Because he deals with figures everyday and his mind functions like a calculator, one might imagine that this is exactly what transpired, or very close to it.

In reality, this archtypical scene has been re-enacted many times since those two pioneer agronomists, Lawrence Dickinson of The Stockbridge School and H.B. Musser of Penn State University, be-

gan training students who wanted to specialize in the turf management field in preparation to becoming golf course superintendents. The basic concept of these two men has changed little regarding academic curriculum and actual field experience on a golf course prior to, during and following formal classroom activity. These principals find favor with Joe Troll and J.M. Duich today at Stockbridge School and Penn State, respectively.

## THREE INTERESTED AND CONCERNED GROUPS

Few of us recognize that the involvement of Dickinson and Musser, as teachers of the first turf students, evolved from the concern of United States Golf Assn. officials about the lack of "trained greenkeepers." The association had published in the Green Section Journal an article seeking answers and inquiring if it was not about time some action was taken about the situation. The other factors, capturing especially the attention of Professor Dickinson, were the many questions issuing each year from the golf course fellows concerning specifically the cultivation of turfgrass used each year at the time of the exhibits of the Horti-

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cultural Society. They expressed interest and outright concern about the methods by which they might do a better job at their respective clubs. As a direct result of these inquiries, the School for Turf Management within the Stockbridge School was initiated in 1926.

It is interesting that in the same year, various "greenkeepers" in Ohio and the adjacent states, banded together in a common cause to "collect and disseminate practical knowledge of the problems of greenkeeping with a view of more efficient and economical maintenance of golf courses." Out of this action the present Golf Course Superintendents Assn. of America was formed.

Even more interesting and ironic is that these same parties, the United States Golf Assn., the great agronomic oriented universities and the GCSAA are still trying, in harmony, to accomplish the same principals and needs almost 50 years later. Having criss-crossed the golfing scene since 1928, I can say without reservation that many problems that were real in 1926 have been solved. But like all progressive groups attentive to the needs of their society, the quest for quality is being greatly enhanced by the appearance on the turf maintenance scene of the Ron Hilgers with the practical help of the Bill Joneses and the total understanding of men such as Harry Sommers and the golf clubs that he represents.

### THE ANSWER

Bill Jones, a turf management graduate of James State 12 years ago, had anticipated a few questions and was prepared to provide the answers. The last time this challenge came up concerning turf students "living in" at the club was seven years ago, when he wasn't as well fortified as today. Without hesitation Jones reached into his attaché case and pulled out a folder containing copies of information relating to the turf management students who had worked on the golf course in previous years—how long they had worked at Wayside, their performance record, Jones' letter of achievement to their re-

spective schools, where they went to work after graduating and where they are presently located as golf superintendents. Obviously, because they were his "boys" Jones' interest in them continues. The next folder Jones brought out contained the complete information on the two students who would arrive for work on April 1. Their high-school records and their extra-curricular activities clearly indicated their interest in the horticultural field. The last folder he pulled from the case was reached for by Sommers who opened it immediately.

The first item Sommers found in Hilger's file was his resume, an impressive bit of background information, indeed. Seeing the attached picture of Hilger brought an immediate response from Sommers. "Yes, I remember this man. He does your chemical application work. We had quite a chat last summer while the spray tank was being filled just off the fourth fairway. The impression I received was that he certainly knew why he was out there and the exact nature of the disease he was treating on a preventive basis. I remember, he even knew the chemical properties of the fungicide being used. But I didn't know at the time he was your assistant. In other words, Hilger is a working assistant. This throws a little different light on the subject."

### THE INVOLVEMENT

The turf management trainee students at Wayside, who are fortunate in having a room and board situation, really don't cost the club "extra money" as Sommers thought. Actually, the student-club relationship is more of a mutual benefit arrangement than appears on the surface. Most of them get "hooked" on a golf oriented relationship as a result of their love for the game and the intrinsic ingredients that entice them to become involved in a golf environment—ecology, open space concept of life, vocation that offers a partnership with nature, which can become very personal to a young man seeking to relate his life to a living medium and something that offers more personal returns than simply monetary compensation.

Who, then, Mr. Sommers, is in a better position to offer a helping hand to such young men than the golfer himself, his club and the great golf associations that are present in every metropolitan community in the country? A mutual responsibility with your superintendent, Bill Jones, who is interested in the future generations to provide greater quality? Yes, indeed. Even an obligation to share this great opportunity.

Drawing further on my own experience and observation of others in the turf field, some of the more successful maintenance programs are directly traceable to the infusion of new ideas into older, practical procedures. Thus, the blending of the academic and practical into workable programs are a simple matter of teamwork. It isn't too far afield to compare the role of the assistant superintendent to that of the vice president of a going concern in charge of production, freeing the superintendent to cover other important areas of the total program.

### THE FUTURE: AN OBSERVATION

It is really too bad that this budget committee hearing at Wayside didn't take place in February '73 following the GCSAA's conference and show in Boston. As a club official, Sommers could have been an honored guest with full privileges of viewing the great maintenance exhibits and hearing a variety of subjects by golf course superintendents, academic representatives and technicians from the sophisticated equipment and chemicals firms present.

Specifically, Sommers would have been greatly interested in the views and experiences related by Dr. Joseph Troll, professor of the Stockbridge School and successor to the late Professor Dickinson. One of his most important quotes was from the January, 1923, Bulletin of the Green Section mentioned earlier: "The supply of competent greenkeepers is far below the demand. It is almost impossible for a new club, or an old one which has lost the services of its greenkeeper, to fill the position with an experienced man. At present there are no systematic efforts being made

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