



GREENKEEPING— TODAY and TOMORROW

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CHAPTER VI—THE INFLUENCE OF SALESMEN, PROFESSIONALS, AND LOW HANDICAP MEMBERS ON THE COST AND RESULTS OF GOLF COURSE MAINTENANCE

IF A POLL were taken of the golfers in this country to find out what they considered as factors influencing the cost and result of turf maintenance, it is quite certain that a very large majority would answer something like this: Weather, rain, sunshine, dry spells, and the amount of play. Four-fifths of the answer would be weather.

They are correct, but not to the extent that weather is four-fifths or even one-fifth influential in affecting the cost and result of maintenance. Under modern greenkeeping methods, I venture to say the weather affects the green fees, or revenue, more than the cost of maintenance, and naturally if fewer rounds are played because of inclement weather the greater the cost of a single round will be on a stipulated budget. The number of rounds of play, however, has a decided influence and must not be overlooked.

To the weather, and amount of play, a few golfers will add the greenkeeper and the use of machinery. These are the limits of accepted and recognized influences. Of these the greenkeeper is the most important. There are other influences that greatly affect the cost and results, but are seldom recognized and only occasionally accepted by the golfer. Greenkeepers know them, but the chairmen as a rule fail to accept them and if they do, give them comparatively little value.

"The "dub" is charged with physical damage to the course, because "dubs" are numerous, meek, and uncertain in their play. Of course, physical damage, as divot taking, does affect

the cost and result, but to start an argument I'll say that one low handicap member exerts more influence on the cost than twenty "dubs;" one salesman more than fifty "dubs," and one professional more than seventy-five "dubs."

Don't misunderstand the statement and interpret it to say, "does more damage" than so many "dubs." The influence is just as great for lower cost and higher standards as it is for greater costs. In fact much more so, for the majority of low handicap members and professionals are an asset to the game of golf.

It is doubtful that they realize how strong their influence is, or how powerful it can be. They are neither spectacular nor unduly prominent, and they go about their play or work without fuss or poor sportsmanship, setting a splendid example which forms the backbone of public opinion.

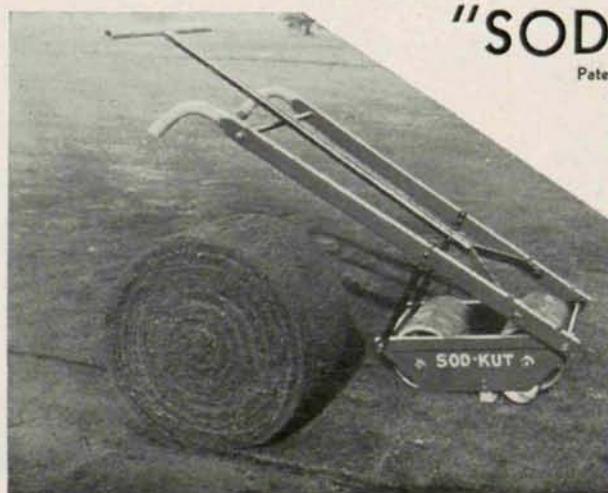
It is the setting of good examples that lowers the cost of equal standard maintenance. "Bobby" Jones, by his superb conduct, has exerted a great influence toward lower maintenance costs. In their zeal to copy (as far as possible) the great player, thousands of golfers have adopted his thoughtful conduct and tolerant attitude. Try to realize the resultant saving in maintenance costs. Unfortunately it cannot be measured.

On the other hand, golf clubs in the vicinity of the town where a recent national championship was held, suffered much damage to their teeing grounds, because players tried to use the lifted turf tee. They had seen several flashy players use such a tee in the championships. Among the smaller clubs a turf tak-

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ing, careless, "smart aleck" low handicap member has a following of hero worshiping turf-taking individuals. Do they influence the cost and standard of maintenance? Most certainly.

LOW HANDICAP PLAYERS OFTEN "CRAB"

Low handicap players have among their membership a much greater per cent of "crabs" than the medium handicappers, average players or "dubs." They must have an alibi for each poorly played stroke and the turf and greenkeeper are almost always at fault. Again they have a following of lesser "crabs." Crabbing lowers the club's morale, which naturally influences the costs and results.

Is it the "dub" or average player as an individual, that does the most damage to the turf, traps, or bunkers? Neither! They dare not, for fear of being bawled out. They will top, slice, hook, and cut their ball rather than be bawled out. But no one, even the professional, dares to bawl out the low handicap man.

A past national champion told the writer that he thought the low handicap members did more damage to the course and were worse "crabs" than the "dubs," or average players. Certainly the example set by the low handicap (10 or under) players, is followed closely by their friends and satellites.

PROFESSIONALS CAN INFLUENCE COSTS

Professionals can influence the cost and result of maintenance directly or indirectly. They are the "man of authority" about the course, in closer touch with all members than anyone about the club. They are particularly friendly with the low handicap member, and sincerely interested in the "dub," the two most important members to feel an influence. Thus by example, the professional is an indirect influence. Directly he can save the maintenance budget and raise the standard by working the greenkeeper, informing him of trouble to the

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greens, water lines, drains or any physical factor in course maintenance.

The greenkeeper in his line of duty cannot cover the course as completely or with the same viewpoint as the professional does in playing around.

The professional has another direct influence that he can exert if he will. That is, the schooling of the members in the value of their help in the course maintenance. A suggestion from the professional can have much more effect than from the greenkeeper.

Encouragement from the professional will cause the greenkeeper to strive to improve the standard for the greenkeeper knows how much assistance a professional can be. Professionals can also be very costly because of their influence in bringing about course alterations and new construction that add greatly to the maintenance cost without an equivalent increase in playing conditions.

The salesman who thoroughly understands soils and fertilizers; or who knows grass seeds from their source to the consumer and also knows the grasses and their habits of growth; or who knows about the mower, or fungicide, and is absolutely sincere and honest, is a true friend to the greenkeeper and golf course maintenance. Such a salesman's influence can save a club money and trouble.

The salesman who parrots his sales talk, uses high pressure methods, misrepresents the opinions of experts, or is a "depression salesman" exerts a very costly influence on the club's maintenance. The only stop to such influence is the keenness of the greenkeeper, for the chairman is very frequently gullible enough to be sold. The modern greenkeeper is capable of putting such salesmen on the defensive at the start of the sales talk, and we find their influence lessening.

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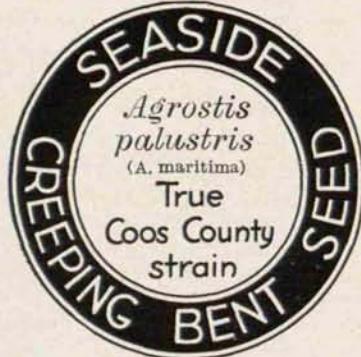
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Wrong fertilizer for the turf or more fertilizer than can possibly be used by the grass; all of which if repeated would be accumulative in their influence upon the costs and results.

The forcing of the purchase of good mowing equipment that is not adapted to the particular course, causes additional cost. One could go through all the equipment and supplies and cite many examples of the costly effect of "good salesmanship."

This article has attempted to bring to the attention of its readers the less obvious influences upon the costs and results of golf turf maintenance. It does not infer that all low handicap members and professionals exert costly influences, neither does it make all salesmen crooked or even bent (seedsmen). It is the fine influences of the majority of these individuals that helps to keep the cost of maintenance within reason. Yet when one of these fellows does get loose, how he can run up the cost.

Next month— Chapter VII—The problem of factory alterations.

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