

The Cleveland Green Section *

By J. K. Bole

The definite organization of Golf in Cleveland was brought about in September, 1917. This was a purely social association, and was only interested in tournaments and in one big get-together meeting for the promotion of good fellowship. The association was made up of eight clubs, who paid very nominal dues. There was no office of any kind and no paid employees, and the interest in the association was entirely dependent on those in office and the amount of time and effort they gave to the association. From the start, however, the idea gradually grew in the minds of the active workers in the association, that there was an opportunity to do something actually worth while for the game of golf in the Cleveland district, and that there was a big field for a local Green Section patterned after the United States Golf Association Green Section at Washington.

In 1922, the Cleveland District Golf Association Green Section was definitely organized, and a secretary appointed who was paid by the association for half his time, and desk space secured in a down-town office. During this year (1922) the Green Section did a certain amount of collective buying, and conferred with the different clubs on vital golf problems to the best of its ability. But it was recognized by those in charge that if the local Green Section idea was going to work, it would have to be put on a permanent and much more efficient basis, and that an office with two paid secretaries would have to be established; for it was very evident that it was absolutely necessary that there be some one at the office all the time, so that the clubs could get service at all times and have their needs taken care of promptly. There were at this time thirteen clubs in the Association, and they paid for the Green Section service \$50 for nine holes and \$100 for eighteen; and although the service during this first year was very inefficient, the member clubs saved a total of \$4,000 on the year's purchases.

At the end of 1922 steps were taken to reorganize the Association on broader lines. Clubs from the district surrounding Cleveland were taken in and a down-town office was secured and equipped so as to be able to take care of the work of the Association in a systematic and business-like manner. A very important part of this equipment is cross indexed cards that are kept right up to date, one set covering the sources of supply and prices and the other covering problems of construction and upkeep, so arranged that definite information can be given over the phone in a very few words.

During 1923 the work of the Green Section began gradually to show its benefits, and the value of this work to the member clubs was more and more evident, and the result was that at the beginning of 1924 the Association was serving 27 clubs. Today there are 37 clubs in the Cleveland District Association. Several new ones have made applications and will be added after the first of the year.

One of the elements that helped the Green Section to a marked degree was the publishing of the Cleveland District Golfer, a magazine published monthly by the Association, absolutely owned by the Association, and

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controlled by the officers of the Association. This magazine has made it possible for the Green Section to carry its message not only to the officers of the different clubs in the district, but to practically every member of every club.

Our aim has been to get the work of the Green Section before all the members of every club in such a way that they will understand what it is all about, and to show them that each member has a definite part to play in the maintenance and upkeep of his course, and that they owe it to their club and their fellow members that they play their part, no matter how small it may be. With this object in view articles are published every month covering some phase of the work on the course, so that the club members will understand why certain things have to be done at a definite time, and also why neglect on their part to follow the simple rules of etiquette is sure to increase the cost of maintenance, which comes out of the pockets of themselves and their fellow members.

Articles are also published each month, explaining why some golf holes are good and others are bad, and showing how the bad holes can be changed and fair ones improved. These articles are so written and illustrated that every member of a club can understand them. All this is with the definite object in view of educating the general golfing public on the subject of golf architecture so that much of the bad and costly construction will be avoided and the correct and beneficial changes understood.

The Cleveland District Green Section as it operates today has two distinct functions to perform: (1) the purchase of implements and materials; (2) the distribution of information and advice with regard to the laying out, building, and upkeep of golf courses. I have put purchasing first, not because I think it the most important, but because it is the function that will appeal most to the average person.

Our first big job was to get the officers of all the clubs who were members of the Green Section to send any one who came to them with anything to sell to the office of the Association. Once we had accomplished this, we began to get somewhere, and it was only a short time until the salesman or representative who had a worthy product to sell recognized what a saving this meant in both time and money, and gave the Association not only co-operation but prices that made it possible to save the clubs a considerable percentage on everything they bought. We have tried in every case, and have succeeded in most of them, to get more than one make of every item that we, from our own personal knowledge and experience, could recommend, thereby keeping competition keen on every item if possible.

The Association is carrying on a lot of tests and experiments all the time, under actual service conditions, and as soon as a machine, implement, or material proves its worth it is recommended along with other approved items of the same kind or for the same purpose, and it then develops into a question of the best price and deliveries, and in some cases service. On many of the large items of equipment and machinery we have required the manufacturers to carry spare parts and service right in Cleveland, so that the clubs can be taken care of promptly in case of broken machines. This purchasing bureau not only saves the clubs actual money on purchases, but it also saves a great deal of time, not only for the chairman of the green committee, but for the greenkeeper and other paid employees of the club. All the greenkeeper has to do is to call the

office on the phone and give his order, which he must confirm with a requisition, forms for which he is supplied. The office makes out the order in triplicate, one copy to the club, one to the source of supply, and one is filed in the office. From that point on the club is relieved of all trouble. The order is followed right through until delivered. If it is a hurry-up order, it is wired or telephoned. Where the order involves a carload or carloads of the same material for a number of clubs, as sometimes happens, contracts and arrangements are made for delivery right on to the different courses. While the purchasing bureau has saved practically every member club more than its dues this last year, much more important is the fact that the Green Section has prevented many of the clubs from buying useless and in some cases worthless material that would have cost them much more than the actual cost of the material. Some clubs that previously bought annually several thousand dollars' worth of seed, did not buy a pound. In other words, we saved many of the clubs not only on what we bought for them, but also on what we kept them from buying.

The question of buying for the clubs is just in its infancy, and I believe that it will be only a short time until these district purchasing bureaus will be buying everything that the clubs use not only on the course but in the club house, with the possible exception of some of the perishable things that have to be bought from day to day.

The second function of the local Green Section, and to my mind the most important, is the giving of information and advice to the different clubs. I have known of a number of cases where one club has solved a problem of course upkeep, when only a few miles away another club was spending time and money trying to solve the very same problem. With the local Green Section everything of this kind is done away with. The local Section is a medium through which the worthwhile knowledge and experience of one club is carried to every other club that needs or asks for this information. Bulletins covering the most important subjects are sent out to the chairmen of the green committees and greenkeepers of every member club of the Green Section at regular intervals. Many of these bulletins are in anticipation of seasons, conditions, and problems as they are about to come up.

This part of the work has been very greatly helped and amplified by the organization of the greenkeepers of the section. In Cleveland they have their own organization. They meet once a month,—all-day meetings at some course during the good weather, and down-town for dinner and the evening during the winter. We have had some man who was an authority in his subject talk at these meetings, and at others general discussions of some subject that was of prime importance to the different clubs.

One important thing this association of greenkeepers has developed is a standard report card on which the greenkeeper reports to his green chairman the distribution of the pay every two weeks. This enables him to show just what each part of the maintenance job costs, and by comparison with the cards of other greenkeepers, to see also if he is above or below the fair average cost for such work. In this way he is able to confer and get advice that will make it possible for him to reduce his costs where they are high. Because of the interest the greenkeepers are showing in their own Association and in the work of the local Green Sec-

tion, they are rapidly becoming more and more valuable to their clubs, and are developing for themselves a real profession.

For the new club just about to build its course the local Green Section has a very great value. First, it can advise the club with regard to proper architecture; second, with regard to the best and most practical construction; and lastly, it can save the new club a great deal of time and a lot of money through the purchase and following up of the large amount of material that it requires.

A number of local Green Sections are operating in different parts of the country, but I know that some of them are not on a sound basis. I believe it impossible to operate these local Sections where the one who runs it depends on commissions on purchases for his remuneration. Under these conditions the clubs are sure to come out at the little end of the horn, and will be influenced to buy instead of being kept from it as in many cases they should.

I have purposely refrained from saying anything about the connection between the local Green Section and the national Section at Washington, until the end, for the definite reason that I have no doubt but that most of you will forget a lot of this; but I do want you to go away with one definite impression, and that is that the fountain-head at Washington is doing a wonderful work for the good of golf and the benefit of golfers. But if this work is to be carried on to the very best advantage, it must be done through the local green sections, organized along the same lines as the national Section, and with the same high ideals. The local Section can augment the work of the national organization and can keep up, because of its close contact, the interest of the clubs and the green-keepers in this great work. The local Section can interpret the information and advice coming from Washington, into terms that apply directly to the local condition. And this is very important. The local Section acts as an outpost for the national Section, and serves as an experiment station where methods and materials are seen under actual service condition, and the experience and results reported authentically.

I believe golfers all over the country are ready and anxious for organizations such as ours here in Cleveland, and I thoroughly believe that if a definite campaign is inaugurated, these associations can be started and operated successfully in almost every golfing center. It will require a considerable amount of work by some one or by a committee that is experienced and knows how to set up and sell this sort of an organization.

The Cleveland Green Section may not have the right plan or the best way; but I am convinced that, were there Green Sections such as the one in Cleveland established and operating in all the big golfing centers, golf would be on a very sound footing, the cost of golf would be greatly reduced, and the condition of golf courses throughout the country would be improved away beyond anything we know of now; and lastly, the great work our good friends here are carrying on at Washington would be recognized and appreciated to such an extent that the raising of the Endowment Fund would be a simple problem.

Use only finely ground bone meal.—On account of the insolubility of bone meal in water it is necessary that it be finely ground in order that it may be readily available as plant food. In any case bone meal is a slowly acting fertilizer, and little benefit will be derived in using a coarse product. The greater part of your bone meal should pass an 80-mesh sieve.