



THE GOLF COURSE WORKER — TRAINING AND DIRECTION

The USGA Green Section conducted its fifth annual Educational Program at the Biltmore Hotel, New York City, on January 27. The Chairman was William C. Chapin, Chairman of the USGA Green Section Committee.

Ten papers dealing with as many phases of managing golf course personnel were presented throughout the day. Excerpts from four of the papers are printed on the following pages. Edwin Hoyt, Northeastern Chairman of the USGA Green Section Committee, served as moderator of the morning session. Martin F. McCarthy, Mid-Atlantic Chairman of the USGA Green Section Committee, was the afternoon moderator.

The Efficient Use of Men and Equipment

By **ROBERT M. WILLIAMS**

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As we focus our attention today on our country's golf courses, and more specifically on their efficient operation, with thought in mind of greater efficiency, perhaps even reduction of costs, I am mindful of the USGA meeting in Chicago in 1958. At that time several statements were made that I believe bear repeating here:

Herb Graffis said this, "It isn't the cost of the round of golf, but the cost of the round of drinks that follow that makes golf seem expensive."

Charles Eckstein, past president of the Chicago District Golf

Ass'n. stated, "We usually operate our clubs similar to our homes. If we want a particular service, and we can afford it, we have it without much thought towards efficiency."

O. J. Noer said, "Clubs are not a place to save money, nor are they a place to waste money."

We have also heard many old cliches about golf clubs such as:

"Golf is getting too costly."

"All the money is being spent on clubhouse improvements."

"Golf clubs are a luxury, we must expect them to be expensive."

These quotations are often contradictory and call attention to the variance of opinion regarding the cost of golf.

Costs of Course Maintenance

As we endeavor to discuss the subject of efficiency in golf course maintenance we must first set the stage of the perspective picture of maintenance in relation to total club costs so that we can properly evaluate the situation. The round figure of a half million dollars for a 300 member club is fairly realistic, possibly somewhat conservative. Course maintenance costs generally lie in the range of \$40,000 to \$80,000. So taking the average figure for course maintenance of \$60,000, compared to the \$500,000 overall club expense, we can conclude that the cost of operating the course proper is about 12% of the member's expense dollar. As we get closer to the more detailed consideration of the grounds labor, our subject matter today, we are speaking of a \$25,000 to \$50,000 expense which in turn represents 5% to 10% of the member's expense dollar.

We can already conclude, that when we get around to thinking in terms of economics, savings and budget cuts at our clubs, that the grounds department does not lend itself as a major area for consideration. May I hasten to add also, that efficiency does not necessarily indicate reduction of cost or expense but rather the getting of the most out of the money expended.

Evaluating the Superintendent

A second important consideration in "Efficiency in Maintenance," concerns the head of the department, the course superintendent; his attitudes, philosophy and management ability. He is the primary figure concerned with affecting job analysis studies and planning. While we are still a predominantly practical group, we are gradually changing to the more scientific, more educated, more executive type of individual. Fortunately for golf, there have been those superintendents who have continued to educate themselves and clubs who have wanted increasingly better playing conditions. Progress, therefore, continues and at the

same time the gap between top and bottom widens.

Qualify Efficiency

A third point is the qualifying of the term "Efficiency" as used in this connection. Efficiency, implies the accomplishment of objective with minimum waste. Practically every golf club has a different objective when it comes to a standard of course maintenance. Thus, as we approach further discussion of efficiency and course maintenance, let us be mindful that we have to adjust the shoe to fit the foot. Few statements can be made to apply to the majority of cases. No standard can be set to apply to all of our clubs.

Job Analysis

Time and motion studies of the use of men and equipment on golf courses must of necessity be pretty much of the informal type. Observation by the superintendent, keeping of minimum records, and making pilot studies from time to time, can tell us whether a job is being done efficiently. I have tried to develop an approach so that whenever I observe our men working, I ask myself this question: "Is there a better way to do this job without sacrificing quality?" A superintendent must stand off to one side, look at all the details and movements of his men fertilizing a green, for instance, and then try to eliminate any wasteful effort.

Interference—to Players and Workmen

Efficiency in maintenance involves the factor of player interference to the workmen as well as workmen interference to the players. Player interference has become a nightmare to most superintendents. So here we are at the meat of the subject of the "Value of job analysis studies in work planning." How long can we allow for the overall cutting of the greens? How early can we and should we start the crew? How much equipment do we need? We can only answer these questions by being on the job, alert to the situation, and making a problem analysis of a practical nature.

Basic Working Unit—Scope of their Work

Now we come to the question of how

many men we require and the timing and assignment of their duties. At Bob O'Link, with no women players and with most play in the afternoons, our normal daily operation allocates four men to mow greens in the morning. These same men often rake traps in the afternoon. One man continuously mows rough. One man mows tees, one changes cups, tee towels, markers, one man mows green and tee banks, two men mow fairways, repair equipment, spray chemicals, and one or two men work nights on irrigation. About half of these men are engaged all day in their basic assignment and about half are available for half the day for all the other 1,001 jobs that need attention. When we analyze the situation, we have about a dozen men caring for 160 acres of fine turf or an equivalent of about 13 acres apiece. Without work analysis studies I don't know how we would get along as well as we do.

Routing and Assignment

Job assignment is part of the answer to efficiency, but another point is the routing of the men and equipment as they perform their duties. The shape, size, and physical characteristics of the property must be considered. Sometimes the centralized system of having one centrally located service building is the answer to greater efficiency while other times the decentralized system of several outlying tool sheds may help to reduce excessive unproductive travel time to and from assignment areas. Greater mobilization is still another possibility.

Annual Employment Guide

An example of a helpful record that is quite simple is an annual employment guide. By this method the superintendent can be aware of his labor, his costs and his future requirements, all helpful if he intends to be both efficient and stay within the limits of his appropriated budget. Merely show the months of the year and the number of men on your staff at all times for a comparison of the past year and the present year.

Equipment Studies

We have thus far concerned ourselves

mainly with the use of men. What about some of the major equipment items? Do they also need to be studied for efficiency? Yes, and perhaps more so.

A simple example might be taken from the mowing of the collar adjacent to the putting surface. I noted that my men were making as many as four complete circles around the greens to mow the variable width collars that I had designated. It appeared that by reducing the collar to a uniform width we would accomplish the same effect for the golfer and reduce the mowing in half by only having two mower widths for the collar. I checked it out, it worked, and we have made this standard procedure ever since. Another thought on equipment is the use of multiple units to reduce the overall time required for a given job. I find for instance that using two 7-gang fairway mower units will allow us to reduce the overall job from about 8 hours to a 3½ hour job and neither the players or the workmen will have to put up with interference.

Watering practices, fairway fertilization techniques, and numerous other operations could be used as examples.

Chemicals

I would like to make mention of the fact that a great deal of our maintenance efficiency today has resulted from the use of chemicals. There is no more hand weeding, no more repairing of turf damage from the common insects, and very little damage from disease. There are no more yellow fields from the dandelion bloom. We owe a lot to the research people and industry for providing us with better tools for greater efficiency.

Summary

In the final picture, the constant analysis of the operation by the superintendent is a most important factor in our work, providing we remember to keep it practical and if we don't attempt to become statisticians. I believe it will bring about a better understanding as we do a better education job between the superintendent and the club members on the various aspects of golf course maintenance.