

Tournament Pressure?

Are the pros and low ams the only victims of golf's tournament pressure?

How about the golf course superintendent . . . the club manager . . . the home pro?

One veteran super recently included everyone on the list. "When our member-guest tournament arrives, it's tension time," he cracked. "Even the guy running the swimming pool has to be on his toes. One of our greens fronts that area. And when someone's putting, he has to hold up a 'quiet please' sign."

The latter might be a slight exaggeration. However, tournament time at the country club does present quite a challenge to certain of those people connected with the golf operation. This is especially true of the four-day, member-guest brand of competition - that popular social-business-pleasure-obligatory session highlighting the golfing season.

"For some members, our four-ball is a time for them to showcase the course," one superintendent told. "And this is only natural. One of the most popular topics of conversation among golfers is their individual courses and the conditions of them. Frankly, there's no special formula I have for bringing the course to peak playing form and aesthetic height. But I'm aware of the fishbowl nature of the place during a tournament."

Some tournament committees have the foresight to engage in deep preparation for the annual member-guest or invitation - whatever it is called. They meet with each head of the country club operating wings in order to have a fluid motion to the staging of the event. Such sessions are held well in advance of play.

"I think advance preparation is the most important phase of getting it all together," one pro commented. "There are so many details to be studied and decisions which might seem trivial but turn out to be major when they are put into practice under game conditions."

"I remember one year our whole tournament was hanging between success and failure because of the placement of tee markers on a certain hole. We had altered it slightly from the year before, moving the marker back about 15 yards. However, those 15 yards meant that the average tee shot wouldn't carry an extended rough area between the tee and fairway. Most of the post-round conversation on the first day centered on those markers. Somehow, they got changed in a hurry."

Can the super do anything to give that showcasing aspect some appeal?

"Most of the big attractions to guests - the ones that they see during their rounds and casual observations - are the results of long-range planning by the golf committee and others involved in maintenance and improvements," another superintendent disclosed. "Sometimes a drain placed in a vital spot, maybe two or three months before the tournament, proves to be the key in the course holding the well-groomed look. As far as on-the-spot pampering and crash-course improvements, it just can't be done."

"Oh, sometimes we may spray the greens to fancy up their color. But I find that extreme caution must be followed here. I've seen cases where spray methods made the greens so green that the rest of the course looked a sickly yellow by comparison. As far as I'm concerned, the conditioning of the golf course is a 12-month process. If Mother Nature cooperates at opportune

times, we can give the members a good and pride-venting layout when their guests come to play."

Tournament time also presents another form of cooperation - that among the super, home pro and clubhouse manager. "We all have to work together and sometimes a comment of agreement from one or the other does magic with the overall operation," our professional friend added. "I'm in closer on-course contact with the members and their guests. And, if I can, I direct my efforts toward a one-for-all, all-for-one existence for myself, the superintendent and the manager."

Tournament pressure, then, does exist for those non-players whose contributions are just as important as the birdies and bogies out on the course. But as one super put it. . . "what the hell; it's like this for me all the time. We still have to play golf here, long before and long after a tournament."

Gerry Finn

Next Meeting



September 18, 1978

Vesper Country Club

Host Superintendent - Bert Frederick

Director's Meeting - 9:30 a.m.

Membership Meeting - 11:00 a.m.

Lunch available at club

Golf - 1:00 p.m.

Directions: Route 3 North to Tyngsboro/Westford Road exit. Take right at bottom of ramp. Go to next stop light and take left. Go to next stop light and take right over bridge. Coming off bridge take first right. Club on right about 2 miles.

Tournament Format:

Superintendent/Superintendent Championship

Make your own teams. Prizes for Gross and Net.

GM Concept a "Certainty"

According to a recent feature in Club Management - the voice and conscience of the Club Managers Association of America - it appears that the general manager concept of country club operation is a certainty for the future.

In fact, the CMAA already has a strongbead on the future. Seventy-five of its members several months ago met to attend a general manager workshop. The general feeling or pulse of the clubhouse manager is that he or she must be prepared for elevation should the general manager trend develop into permanent practice.

Dean Gerald Lattin of Florida International University highlighted that workshop with a job description draft for the position. Roughly interpreted, the general manager is involved directly in the management of personnel and operations of the club under the guidance of elected club officials who also formulate policy. Among his/her responsibilities are the development of operational policies as separate from club policy, preparation of the annual budget, coordination of all management functions of the club and supervision of all department heads (clubhouse manager, food-beverage manager, golf professional, golf course superintendent).

During the session, staged in Boston, it was estimated that only 20 percent of the private clubs across the country now operate under a true general manager system. However, the consensus was that the percentage will continue to accelerate and that eventually all clubs will embrace the GM concept as the answer to operational demands.

Dean Lattin is convinced that the bulk of general manager material resides in the ranks of clubhouse management. "That (GM system) really is the future as far as club management is concerned in this country," he advised. "There is no question in my mind who is the most logical choice, the best qualified man for the general manager job. It's the clubhouse manager. But that may not always be the case."

Dick Worthington, another speaker at the Boston conclave, had his idea about the filling of the general manager's position. "When the club industry accepts the general manager concept, we are not going to pick all the plums in the orchard," he proposed. "But club managers should fill most of the positions."

If there is an issue to be drawn from these scattered conclusions, it centers on the qualifications of those pretenders to what would be the high and mighty position among the private club managing trio of clubhouse manager, superintendent and golf professional. Would the clubhouse manager be the most qualified because he wears a shirt and tie - maybe even a cummerbund - to work every day? Or is he versed in certain subjects and responsibilities foreign to his pro shop and golf course counterparts?

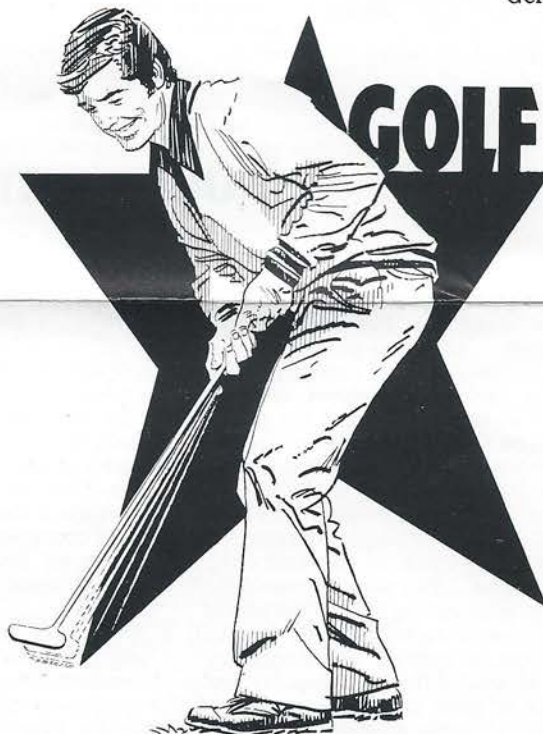
It is pure speculation on the part of Lattin and Worthington as to the giant's portion of job promise each gives to the clubhouse manager in the allocation of the GM franchise. Possibly, it descends from a close association with the clubhouse manager and a personal pride attachment to the profession, such pride generating the assumption that it is the closest under present conditions to the general manager image.

Obviously, if the general manager system is to materialize most of the immediate jobs will be filled by those already in the employment of the club. This makes for a highly, political-laced situation in the race by the clubhouse manager, superintendent, pro or whoever to gain favor of the selection committee. And, despite contradictory feelings on the part of educators and their life, personality probably will have more to do with finalizing the selection than anything else.

To enter into argument as to which department head is best qualified to run the whole show constitutes an interminable

debate. But it is interesting to note that one facet of club operation - the clubhouse manager - is readying himself for positional battle. If the others follow suit, it should be one humdinger of a war.

Gerry Finn



SUPERINTENDENT CHAMPIONSHIP TOURNAMENT RESULTS

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J. Sperandio	2nd Gross	77
K. Mooradian	3rd Gross	78

B. Mucciarone	1st Net	63
N. Mucciarone	2nd Net	64
W. Zoppo	3rd Net	64

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M. O'Kelly	2nd Gross	86

P. Cassidy	1st Net	87
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Letters to the Editor

The Green Section of the
United States Golf Association
May 15, 1978

Dear Gerry:

Your Newsletter editorial of May 1978 makes interesting reading but I must say it misses the mark by a long shot in stating the USGA's position on irrigating golf courses. Although no direct reference was made to my "Green Is Not Great" article that appeared in the August 1977 Golf Journal, this apparently has been the basis for comments by the panel cited in your story. A copy of "Green Is Not Great" is enclosed. Its pertinent points in summary are:

(1) Overwatering is not only bad for turfgrasses but it's also bad for golf. All knowledgeable superintendents and agronomists agree that more permanent turf is lost from overwatering than from underwatering. All knowledgeable players prefer to play from firm turf - on the dry side.

(2) That it is impossible to water fairway turf uniformly because of differences in terrain and soils, presence of rock, contour, slope, etc. Therefore, if a good job of watering is being done, some brown areas are inevitable. It is mainly because of pressures from the membership or a breakdown in communications that forces some superintendents to overwater. Many know that they are doing so! Paul Voykin's comment that "I wish I could get a written statement from my green chairman saying it was all right to reduce irrigation" attests to this dilemma. But I disagree with the conclusion of the editorial that "it boils down to having burned fairways or green, soggy turf." The solution certainly is somewhat in between as my original article clearly points out!

(3) Apparently most golfers believe that the darker green the turf is, the healthier it is, and this is entirely false! There is wide genetic variability in turfgrasses. Not all have the deep color of Merion bluegrass but some attempt to force that dark green color by the use of extra fertilizer and water. There are healthy green shades in-between and if the grasses present are of that genetic type, overfertilizing and overwatering inevitably will lead to a solid stand of *Poa annua*. This is proof of our present predicament and the reason why many of our courses today have so much *Poa annua*.

(4) Pressures from the players, who are neophytes to turfgrass management, exert influence on the superintendent to water to keep greens soft in order to make up for the deficiencies of their game. The USGA holds to the thesis that the course should be conditioned to the requirements of the game; the Green Section holds to the thesis that the course should be managed to encourage the permanent grasses. We have never waived from this position.

No amount of research in better grasses will cure the ills of overwatering. We're not going to discard our irrigation systems as new varieties are introduced. We are not going to, with a wave of the hand, eliminate the natural problems of terrain, soil types, etc. listed under (2) above, simply because we introduce new, more drought-resistant turfgrass varieties. Rather, we

must through management now, seek better ways to combat problems inherent to present day golf course culture. This is the short term cure for better golf courses. Using less water is a step in that direction.

I would hope that you would publish my article in full when space permits. The comments from many have been good; therefore, it surprises me that some could place the extreme interpretation upon it by intimating that the USGA is advocating solid brown golf courses. Nothing is farther from the truth!

Sincerely,
Alexander M. Radko
National Director

1233 Kansas Avenue
Modesto, CA 95351
May 25, 1978

Dear Jerry:

The recent crusade by the USGA for brown fairways surprises me because I thought we were all striving for ideal conditions. Brown dry fairways leave a lot to be desired because they can be equally as unpredictable to play off as the green somewhat over watered ones.

In my opinion we should not compromise. There is no reason, with the irrigation equipment available, not to be able to provide a green firm fairway turf. This gives the serious golfer the good lies he is entitled to and the person who enjoys playing for the beauty and relaxation what he prefers.

The two major causes of poorly irrigated golf courses are inadequate systems and the inability of superintendents to apply water. I have seen superintendents with some very poor systems produce some good turf. Also I have seen other superintendents with good systems with very poor turf. I do not need or want my green chairman to tell me to have either soggy or brown fairways. I believe it is my responsibility, first to select equipment which will be adequate. And second to dedicate myself to provide green and firm golf turf.

It appears to me the USGA agronomists would provide a greater service to golf by attempting to educate the club official, owners, etc. of the importance of a well designed irrigation system rather than crusade for less than ideal conditions. Since irrigation is one of the most important management practices on a golf course, it behooves every superintendent to devote a greater amount of his time in gaining knowledge of principles and application of water. Research has provided us with new grasses, better equipment, information on fertilization, heights of cut and many others; but, they are of no use unless we try them in our conditions.

Golfers at Del Rio are not willing to settle for brown or soggy fairways and will not have to because I intend to continue to manage the application of water even if it means plugging sprinklers, changing nozzle sizes, adjusting cycles and times daily and making alterations in the system as needed. No, unless Mother Nature alters the climatic conditions so as to make it impossible to have adequate water, I will not be a party to this new crusade.

Sincerely yours,
Clifford A. Wagoner, CGCS

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