

# NEWSLETTER

January, 1981



*Golf Course Superintendents Association*

OF NEW ENGLAND, INC.

Sponsors and administrators of the Lawrence S. Dickinson Scholarship Fund — Awarded yearly to deserving Turf Management Students.

# Happy New Year

## Will demands follow the trend?

One thing about inflation, it hits from all sides.

And that's what the golf course superintendent wonders about in anticipation of increasing dues and services costs to the country club member. If they are inflated, will his demands follow?

The golf course budget should take a jump this year, if it already hasn't gone that route. And because of it, plus other factors pertinent to having smooth country club operation, most members will have to dig a little deeper when their bills roll around.

In many cases, there will be a rise in dues. Costs of drinks, food and other club life necessities are in a hiking mood. It will be a larger nick on the wallet to ride in a golf car, pay for a locker...in general, everything at the club is going up except your handicap.

It's only natural that the member expect more, if he's paying more. That's an equation someone worked out many business moons ago. And it has worked against the superintendent.

"I only hope that there's some way to educate the membership to the important facts of my budget," one superintendent informed. "Most members figure that if the cost of maintenance goes up, it means we're getting more sophisticated equipment and upgraded chemicals to enrich the course. Naturally, they'll be looking for an August National by the first of May."

Because of inflation outside the club, it is a fact of budget makeup that most of the increases in maintenance outlay will cover badly-needed raises for labor. One superintendent made this stark revelation:

"It's going to cost my club about 12 percent more to get the same kind of course I gave them last year. Only two percent of my budget hike covers anything other than cost of my help. When you consider that the cost of materials follows the

national average, I'll have to do some scraping to give them the same course."

Many superintendents have learned that they will have to get along with equipment that is outdated and "legal wrecks." "I'm limited to one piece of new equipment every year," another super said. "So, I have to put my needs in that department on a priority basis. But that's the way it should be. I have to learn to live with cutback. I do it at home, so I can do it on the job."

That is both a practical and admirable attitude. The super knows that the club can't afford to give him every piece of equipment he seeks. He has to set up a tight program of selective purchasing of new machines and regular repair of the old ones.

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### Next Meeting Annual Meeting Jan. 5, 1981 Needham Golf Club

|                   |            |
|-------------------|------------|
| Directors Meeting | 9:00 a.m.  |
| Regular Meeting   | 10:30 a.m. |
| Lunch             | Noon       |
| Voting            | 1:30 p.m.  |
| Educational       | 2:00 p.m.  |

## It never did snowball

The enterprising minds were there a few years ago when cross-country skiing appeared to beckon for pay-as-you-use them, well-groomed tramping grounds. The sleeping golf course lay under a blanket of snow and was just waiting to turn over new and fresh income for the country club.

Several clubs took the bait, too. Cross-country skiing was just beginning to take hold on a sporting public which shunned the more dangerous and expensive alpine wing of the winter craze. And the new entry in search of the sports' dollar came alive with activity.

There's a key word in the above introduction -- expensive. As we, who have taken to the slopes realize, the cost of alpine skiing has kept up with the spiraling cost of everything else. In fact, there are devotees of the game insisting it has passed everything in sight.

"That's where anyone thinking they could turn a buck serving the cross-country skier took a header," one observer close to a financial disaster in the Berkshires disclosed. "People rushing out to join the cross-country skiing movement were of two categories. They either had deserted the alpine ranks because of its cost or they were skiing novices seeking the cheapest form of outdoor recreation."

Those are biting but wise words. Except in isolated resort areas, where owners have a captive audience in a spending mood because of a vacation spirit, cross-country skiing has taken a lot of investors to the cleaners.

One venture in the Berkshire Mountains is said to have taken losses in six figures country. "The big thing was a matter of logistics," our informer told. "The cross-country area needed five to six hundred skiers a weekend to break even. Well, you just don't draw that many from the far-away cities. Remember, one of the appealing aspects of cross-country skiing is its cost. After purchasing equipment, most cross-country people figure their spending has ended."

And, actually, it has. The average cross-country addict is like the jogger in running. He looks around at the wide open spaces and views them as his own personal playground. There are no fences or watchdogs to keep him out. So, he just roams as he pleases and without it having to cost him a dime.

A few country clubs got caught up in the alleged cross-country skiing explosion. However, most were cautious enough not to go beyond staking out courses and applying limited conditioning to them.

One public course in Western Massachusetts didn't even bother to charge skiers. "I just let them pick their way around certain areas on the course and invited them to warm up in the clubhouse afterward," its owner revealed. "It never materialized. I never sold a pot of coffee or pushed a drink. What happened was that skiers started to come with brown lunch bags and thermos jugs!"

Of course, the snowless winter of 1980 also killed off thoughts of a financial windfall by those plunging into the cross-country skiing business. As a matter of fact, the snow famine clinging to New England over the past several winters seems to have engulfed the region at the same time cross-country skiing was supposed to overwhelm it.



The combination of no snow cover and the apparent reluctance on the part of skiers to pay their way onto their plodding grounds has put a damper on the country club's year-round recreation movement. Some clubs thought cross-country skiing would keep members at the course during the slow winter months and be a source of off-season income.

Apparently, cross-country skiing is not the answer to uncovering such revenue. One investor in a venture (not a superintendent or pro), put it rather bluntly. "Anyone can see that skiing has two kinds of participants," he grouched. "The alpine skiers aren't afraid to spend the money to use lifts. The cross-country skier wouldn't pay two cents to tramp down Broadway in New York if you packed it with six inches of snow."

This is not meant as a condemnation of cross-country skiers. However, it does appear that the sport isn't turning enough dollars to warrant serious financial involvement in it. Simply, it is a form of cheap exercise that keeps the sporting public from getting bed and rocking chair sores in winter.

The country club must explore other avenues, if it is looking for a means to keep the flow of revenue from being interrupted during the winter months. As for cross-country skiing, it never did snowball, at least at the country club. Members and friends just never could cotton to buying it.

Gerry Finn

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## Will demands follow the trend?

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"I accept this, but I hope the member realizes the circumstances and doesn't look for something I can't give him," the same super continued. "In reality, I'm getting what I had last year in the way of materials and labor. Expanding on course improvements doesn't run hand in hand with that position."

Some of the extravagance, then, may have to give way to the more important goals of giving golfers playable lies on the fairways and greens that invite favorable 19th hole comment. It's nice and aesthetic to have potted flowers surrounding every teeing area and serving as a backdrop to each green. However, if they are to be had at the expense of the browning of a fairway or the pock-marking of a green, they must be treated as lost luxuries.

The superintendent, then, will have his hands full this winter. With the off-season emphasis on refurbishing and repairing equipment, he and his indoor crew won't go begging for things to do.

Meanwhile, the country club would do well to let its members know where those dues increases et al are going in the operation of the course, pro shop and clubhouse. Sometimes, all the member sees is that glaring notice that it's going to cost him more to live the country club life. If it comes without explanation, his natural reaction is to expect "the something extra for the something extra he does out."

After the realization of spiraling costs sets in, perhaps he will temper his demands. He should expect the best playing conditions possible. Anything beyond that is unfair to those people involved -- the superintendent, as well as the grounds committee and board of governors who have to share the responsibility for everything he sees on the course.

Dues increases and assessments. They're a tough act to follow.

Gerry Finn

### Congratulations to

Don Hearn  
Joe Browning  
Winners of The John Shanahan Memorial  
Tournament

### Congratulations to

Ronald Milenski  
Voted in at Last Meeting

### To be voted in at next meeting

William Berger - Fort Devens  
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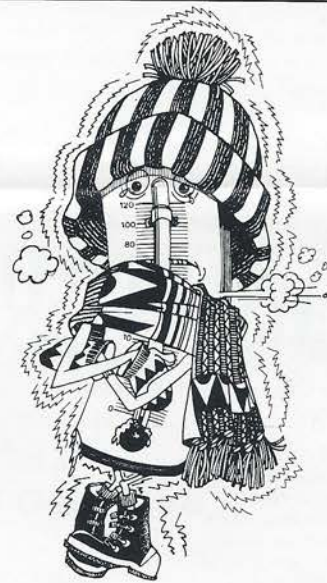
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