

## The Greenkeeper's Dwindling Budget

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In the past few years, golf clubs have referred to one another for information on all manner of subjects. Almost every month a questionnaire is received, and usually information is sought on the cost of maintaining the golf course. Figures are required for the purpose of comparison; in some cases, no doubt, to support a request for an increased budget; in others, perhaps, to furnish material for a criticism of a present system or criticism of individuals who may be regarded as extravagant.

The interchange of information on technical matters, such as the growing of turf, control of pests, fertilizing, and golf course maintenance generally, is interesting and instructive and has contributed greatly to the improved standard of golf course maintenance. There was a time—not so many years ago—when a check on the prices of materials, seed, fertilizers, and the like was necessary; but today there is little or no excuse for lack of knowledge on that subject; indeed, there is far more need for a check on the expenditures in most club houses than outside of the club houses.

Unless there is similarity in the construction of courses, soil conditions, cost of labor, and standard of maintenance desired and attained, comparing the cost of maintenance expense is of little value. The form of accounting often varies greatly too, and what is greens expense at one club may be charged to another account elsewhere; or like service involving that expense may not be rendered in both clubs. Elaborate cost accounting reports are required of some greenkeepers, the value of which seems to be over-estimated. The difference in season may easily account for wide difference in the cost of such items as mowing rough, raking traps, and watering greens, and the figures covering the past five years, including as they do one of record rainfall and another of record drought, can not have any real comparative value.

The desire for better maintenance is another factor. Every golfer and every one concerned in the operation of a golf club is continually striving for better things. These better things cost money, and a steadily rising cost is inevitable. In a well-established golf club, where there is continuity of policy, it is of some value to be able to compare the yearly accounts of various departments, and each club must decide for itself just how much detail its statements should furnish. There is some advantage to be gained by comparing the costs of maintaining two 18-hole courses in the same year and in the same county of the same State, provided those making the comparison are familiar with the physical differences and the general construction of the two courses and the difference in standard of maintenance each club regards as suitable to its particular needs.

Not very long ago a club in the Far West sent a questionnaire to many large clubs in the East inquiring the cost of annual maintenance and the cost of building the courses. Very recently a questionnaire from the State of Washington sought information on the value of the proprietary certificates of Eastern clubs. Just imagine what a spread there will be between highs and lows in these returns and of what practical use they could be to the inquiring club.

It is safe to say that not more than 5 per cent of the members of any golf club take the trouble to study the treasurer's report; but 95 per cent are deeply interested in the standard of golf course maintenance. If that standard is poor, the members are unhappy and there is no pleasure for the board, the golfers, nor the staff. At the end of such a season, who cares whether the balance reported by the treasurer is \$1,000 or \$2,000, one way or the other?

Surely the reduction of greens staff for the closing months of a golf season, with the inevitable drop in maintenance standard in order to keep costs within a budget, is of the utmost folly. Perhaps one day some one will ask a far more important question—"What proportion of the club's income is spent on the golf courses and essential facilities of a golf club, and what proportion on the trimmings that go to make a country club?" It is far easier to obtain appropriations for such items as orchestras, interior decorations, and the like, than for such essentials as fertilizer or new greens equipment. Very frequently the equipment at the disposal of greenkeepers is of poor quality and inadequate, and rarely indeed is the greenkeeper furnished with proper buildings for storage of equipment and supplies.

The success of a golf club depends almost entirely upon the quality of the golf course. Yet the greens budget is the one that is cut to the lowest possible figure, and today club houses usually consume more of the club's income than the game for which the clubs were founded and to which they owe their existence.

In many large clubs, the cost of running the club house exceeds the costs of maintaining *two* golf courses. In addition, the club-house restaurant has a loss running into several thousands of dollars while green fees received from the courses run to nearly half the maintenance budget. The net result is something to ponder over. Such a situation might be expected in a community country club, where golf is but one of its attractions; but it often happens that clubs allow themselves to drift from "golf" to "country clubs" until they become neither one nor the other. In these days when golf clubs are so numerous there is real competition, and the one that falls behind in its standard of golf course or courses is apt to see a declining membership and declining income—a very serious situation for the club encumbered with many country club facilities and activities which are not self-supporting.

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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Injury to greens from excessive fertilization.**—Our putting greens, which are creeping bent planted one year ago, are now, in June, in poor condition, some being so poor that there is no place for a cup. Last year we fertilized them only with sulphate of ammonia, at the rate of 75 pounds to a green, the greens being 5,000 to 6,000 square feet in area. We watered them about three times a week, and cut them as often to about 5/16 inch. Last September they suffered as if from brown-patch. They came up pretty well in April of this year, but about May 15 the grass began to die. We have fertilized them this spring with activated sludge at a rate of about 250 pounds to each green, and we have now just completed fertilizing them with a mixture of 40 pounds of activated sludge and 3 pounds of sulphate of ammonia to each 1,000 square feet. We have top-dressed each green