



Better Turf for Better Golf

TURF MANAGEMENT

from the USGA Green Section

MISTER CHAIRMAN

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WHAT is the job of a Green Committee Chairman?

The answer to this question has been sought through the circulation of a questionnaire to representative Green Committee Chairmen throughout the country. The questionnaire was designed to gain information relating to these subjects: (1) the average length of service of Green Committee Chairmen; (2) the degree of authority vested in the Green Committee Chairman for making decisions affecting the membership's use of a golf course in relation to the welfare of the course; (3) his relationship to the golf course superintendent and the division of responsibility between these two persons; (4) whether or not the Green Committee Chairman and his superintendent attend educational conferences.

Green Committee Chairmen in seventeen geographically well-distributed states responded to the questionnaire. It is hoped that their answers may help others to gain an insight into the responsibilities of this extremely important job.

Previous Experience

How much experience in Green Committee activities has the chairman had? Approximately three-fourths of the chair-

men answering the questionnaire had served on the Green Committee prior to becoming chairman. Length of such service on the committee ranged from one to four years.

One of the questions was: "How long have you served as chairman of the Green Committee?" Answers ranged from two months to 17 years. Fifty per cent of the chairmen had held their positions three years or longer and another 30 per cent had been chairman for two years. A little more than half the responses, however, indicated that the job was rotated frequently.

Authority

Seventy-five per cent of the chairmen indicated they had the responsibility for closing the course in the event of inclement weather during which play would result in damage to the golf course.

In response to a question concerning control of golf buggies (motorized carts), 37 per cent said they made the decision as to whether or not buggies should be used during unfavorable weather; 37 per cent said that buggies were not used on their courses, and the other 26 per cent indicated the decision was made by someone other than the Green Committee Chairman. Two persons said the Board of Governors or Directors made this decision and

one indicated the professional had the authority to do so.

One chairman who said he made the decision concerning the use of buggies during inclement weather indicated that the professional was given authority to act in his absence. One chairman said he made the decision in cooperation with the golf course superintendent.

Degree of Authority

More than 75 per cent of those queried answered that the golf course superintendent was directly responsible to the Green Committee Chairman. The others indicated that the superintendent was responsible to the green committee primarily. One person said the superintendent was responsible to the chairman and the club manager and another said the superintendent was responsible to the "green chairman who works in conjunction with pro."

"Do you have to advise your superintendent concerning technical aspects of golf course maintenance or does he keep abreast of new developments on his own?" In answer to this question, 73 per cent said the superintendent did not need technical advice from the chairman, 16 per cent said the chairman and superintendent worked together, and 11 per cent found it necessary to advise the superintendent.

None of the chairmen indicated they interviewed men to be hired or discharged from the golf course maintenance crew, but one person indicated he and his superintendent worked together in this matter.

With regard to the preparation of a golf course maintenance budget, 21 per cent of the chairmen said they prepared it; 27 per cent said it was done by the superintendent. Most of the other answers indicated that this was a joint project between the two men, sometimes involving the Board of Directors, the club manager, the professional and various other individuals. One person said "Board of Directors govern budget" and one said, "No prepared budget — committee manages expenditures and details kept by superintendent."

Educational Conferences

The questions asked about conferences

were: "Have you attended turf conferences? Does your superintendent attend? Do you encourage him to do so by supporting a budget item to pay his expenses to such conferences?"

Sixty-three per cent indicated that both the superintendent and the Green Committee Chairman had attended at least one educational conference. Sample comment, "We certainly have attended turf conferences and from information obtained our course is in improved condition."

Every chairman responding, with two exceptions, said that his golf course superintendent attended turf conferences with expenses paid by the club. One person failed to answer this part of the question and one person answered "No" to all three parts of the question.

The last question asked was: "What, in your opinion, are the proper functions of a green committee chairman? What are the proper functions of a superintendent? And which are the most important of each? This was a rather difficult question because answering it required a considerable amount of writing. Such questions are not well suited to a questionnaire of this sort and it was to be expected that not all those queried would answer it. There were numerous interesting comments, however, and some of them were:

"The relation of a Green Committee Chairman and the superintendent must vary with the knowledge that the Green Committee Chairman possesses. In our situation none of us thinks he has the 'know-how' of our superintendent. Consequently, he is given pretty much a free hand. He seeks advice and likes to discuss certain problems with the committee and his relation with the club manager is always perfect." (Kansas)

"Cooperation and understanding, coupled with good working relations with pro are most important." (Washington, D.C.)

"Green chairman should assist the superintendent at all times in keeping the course in proper playing condition, and give him whatever assistance he needs in advice and complaints from members of club. Green

chairman and superintendent should be close together at all times." (Texas)

"There has to be somebody to direct the yearly program for maintenance of the golf course. In a small club with limited resources this can be done very well by a member interested enough to take courses in turf management and attend turf meetings, and then work with the superintendent in carrying out the program. However, unless this member has the interest to learn the proper methods he will cause more harm than good. With sufficient funds the club should hire a superintendent to initiate and direct the yearly program, and then the green chairman is simply the link between the superintendent and the Board of Directors." (Indiana).

"Chairman should only be in an advisory capacity and consult with superintendent in regard to budget, etc." (Nebraska).

"Coordination with intimate knowledge of players' wants and course needs." (New York).

"To plan with superintendent all course work and to act as liaison between members, board and course operation." (North Carolina)

"Obtain an adequate budget. Get and keep a competent superintendent. Establish policy and approve long range maintenance program." (Virginia)

"To serve as liaison between superintendent and members. To recommend any changes in course. Control number of tournaments and time of holding. Confer on policies of turf maintenance, etc." (Missouri)

"Policy." (Minnesota)

"Speaking only for . . . club, there the chairman of the green committee has the ultimate responsibility for seeing that the two courses are in proper shape and the green superintendent reports to him directly. Of course, he is saddled with extra-curricular activities from time to time as they arise." (New Jersey)

"Should be well acquainted with the operation and maintenance of the whole course and should know just when to plant winter greens. Also, he should prepare for his summer greens and should know about

golf course diseases of the soil and what to do if they should occur, as well as know when the soil needs fertilizer and water." (Alabama)

"The Green Committee Chairman should first of all be a golfer and an active one who knows the condition of the course and the wants of the membership. He should also learn some of the technical data regarding golf course maintenance so that he can intelligently discuss same with the superintendent. Most green committee chairmen are not well acquainted with the problems of golf course maintenance." (Illinois)

"Thorough knowledge of course in its best playing condition." (California)

Functions of Superintendent

Comments on the functions of a superintendent were:

"Obtain and train a competent maintenance crew. Schedule work. Maintain course. Supervise. Keep chairman advised of unusual problems." (Virginia)

"Course needs and players' wants." (New York)

"To employ course labor, buy supplies and carry out the planning of the Green Committee." (North Carolina)

"Superintendent has full charge of maintenance, hiring and firing crew, fix compensation, subject to approval of green committee. Purchases, subject to green committee as to major items." (Missouri)

"Administratoin." (Minnesota)

"He must be an expert on turf and in a club like . . . be able to handle a relatively considerable number of men efficiently. But, of course, the main thing is to see that the golf course is kept in good condition." (New Jersey)

"Should take care of regular cutting of greens and complete course maintenance, except extra construction work, to improve the course. Also he should make regular inspection of the greens for disease and report it to the chairman of the green committee." (Alabama)

"The proper function of a golf course superintendent is to know his golf course thoroughly. Keep a chart of the operations

and constantly keep a check on the condition of the soil and know when to make changes in types of fertilizer and other types of treatment to greens, tees and fairways. He also should work in complete harmony with the chairman of the green committee. He should keep abreast of the latest developments in the treatment of turf. Frankly speaking, it is difficult to employ a superintendent today that will measure up to these specifications." (Illinois)

"Proper handling of help." (California)

"Green superintendent should have full responsibility of the golf course." (Nebraska)

As to the most important joint functions of the green chairman and the superintendent, some of the comments were:

"For chairman—get and keep a competent superintendent. For superintendent—schedule work, maintain course." (Virginia)

"Cooperation between chairman and green superintendent." (California)

"Both should have a knowledge of the other's function. We encourage our crews to play golf." (New York)

In Summary

If we consider that the chairmen who answered this questionnaire are typical, it appears that we might draw the following conclusions:

(1) A large percentage of Green Committee Chairmen do not hold this position long enough to warrant their attempting to learn all the technical phases of turfgrass maintenance. Perhaps it suffices for the chairman to know enough concerning turf maintenance to be able to determine whether his superintendent is capable and progressive.

(2) Most Green Committee Chairmen are charged with the major responsibility of protecting the golf course from damage which might be inflicted by play or the use of golf buggies during unfavorable weather.

(3) In his relationships with the golf course superintendent, the Green Committee Chairman should serve as a "buffer" or liaison between the superintendent and the

TURF MANAGEMENT

The book "Turf Management," sponsored by the United States Golf Association and edited by Prof. H. B. Musser, is a complete and authoritative guide in the practical development of golf-course turfs.

This 354-page volume is available through the USGA, 40 East 38th Street, New York 16, N. Y., the USGA Green Section Regional Offices, the McGraw-Hill Book Co., 350 West 42nd Street, New York 36, N. Y., or local bookstores. The cost is \$7.

membership. He should relay the desires of the Board of Directors to the superintendent and he should present the needs of the superintendent (equipment, supplies, and labor) to the Board of Directors.

(4) In most cases the superintendent is directly responsible only to the Green Committee Chairman, who in turn represents both the superintendent and the club membership.

(5) Most Green Committee Chairmen work with their superintendent in matters concerning major objectives, long range plans, and budget preparation. Few of them concern themselves with such matters as hiring and discharging members of the maintenance crew.

(6) Almost all Chairmen recognize the value of educational conferences and see to it that the club pays the expenses of the superintendent while he attends such conferences.

(7) Most important functions of a chairman: Make policies and plans; urge the club to provide the necessary men and materials for good golf course maintenance.

(8) Most important functions of a superintendent: Provide a high standard of golf maintenance as efficiently and economically as possible. Keep abreast of new developments that would improve the golf course or the efficiency of operations.

(9) Most important attributes of both men: Cooperation and understanding.

The USGA Green Section wishes to thank those men who took the time to answer the questionnaire upon which this article is based.