

# Honestly, Can One Budget Be Compared With Another?

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Can the budget of one club really be compared with the budget of another?

The answer matters very little, because the plain truth is that budgets and golf courses *will* be compared. Man, especially in economic matters, must be logical. He must standardize; make a formula; figure the percentages. He must always compare. This is his nature.

How often have you heard something like this:

"Sleepy Links Golf Club only spends \$40,000 a year, has a crew of 4 men and the course is in good condition! Why do we have to spend so much money?"

The speaker is obviously not a member of Sleepy Links. He has only skimmed the surface. He doesn't know all the facts, and maybe he doesn't want to know them. But in all fairness, he should stop and ask himself:

1. How many rounds are played at Sleepy Links each year?
2. How often are the greens, fairways, and tees mowed?
3. Is the course closed for maintenance one day a week?
4. Does the maintenance crew stop work as members play through or does it continue to work?

And so on. Comparing two budgets or two golf courses is like comparing two of anything else. They may appear similar at the outset, but the more you know about them, the less similar they become.

Golf courses cannot be standardized. They do not fit any formula. Their value, beauty and enjoyment depends on their individuality. The variation in size of tees and greens; the length of the course; the types and location of trees; the size, outline and number of bunkers, the topography—these are the wonderful differences. This is their nature.

Can categories be standardized? I wonder

what is meant by "categories"? If it means can we develop a standard method of record-keeping and place particular jobs in certain categories, then the answer is probably "yes." However, if it means allocating a fixed percentage of our budget for each category—and thereby permit comparison in dollars of one course budget with another, then I must answer an emphatic NO! There are just too many variables. The personality of an individual golf course, its membership and staff are all involved, and no one can standardize personalities. One can't compare a \$10,000 fertilizer item at one course with \$2,000 for the same item at another.

To digress for just a moment, I think we do ourselves and our profession an injustice by constantly referring to the rising cost of golf course maintenance. Of course it's rising—and so is everything else! Ours is not the only rising curve in golf course operations. Inflation eats at all of us, but we grass growers didn't invent inflation, nor did we start it. In fact, because of improved methods, equipment, and materials, the golf course maintenance operation is far more efficient today than it has ever been. We are doing a better job than 20 years ago, and usually with less labor. Compare this with other phases of club operation.

If it is the nature of man to compare, and if it is the nature of the golf course to defy comparison, have we then reached an impasse? Not, I think, if we wish otherwise. Golf is only enjoyed to the fullest when the course provides the best possible playing conditions and pleasant surroundings. Emphasis of these points in relation to the money being spent is therefore important and the main point. In fact, it is the *only* point. It's not what one spends, it's what one receives for it that counts.

Your budget is the fact. Comparing it with others is the fiction!