

Keeping the membership informed.

Running A Tight Ship Without Sinking It

by WILLIAM H. Bengeyfield, Western Director, USGA Green Section

In perhaps the most costly era ever known to golf course maintenance, the search is on for new ways to run a "tight ship." Plagued by rising costs and hobbled by heavy play and demands, the chairman, green committee, and the superintendent are in between that proverbial "rock and a hard spot." Everyone looks for a new Colconda. Few, if any, find it.

These are difficult times (they always are). How nice it would be to discover new ideas and new thoughts to deal with them. But the temptation is great to fall back on old and obvious remedies. It's easy to carry out indiscriminate cost cutting; eliminating two or three men from the crew; placing contracts with the lowest bidder; not replacing equipment; going the cheapest way possible every time possible. There is really no trick to saving this kind of money on a golf course. The trick comes about two years later in finding a way to bring the course back into condition without spending three times as much money. A New Zealand friend puts it well: "Cheap is often dear and dear is often cheap."

In our business-oriented society it has been proven there is simply no substitute for good

management. In golf course turf operations, this usually means a topnotch golf course superintendent. He is a saving, not a cost. He will save a club far more than the added salary he commands. Because of good recordkeeping, he knows costs. He saves in better management of personnel, equipment, purchases, and at the same time provides a far better-conditioned golf course for the membership. And that is probably the biggest saving of all!

Good management however, should not have its beginning and end with the golf course superintendent. In fact, most golf course maintenance costs today are the result of decisions reached (or not reached) by the past green committees. The committee is the key factor in the operation of any private golf club. It sets the direction, determines the policy, hires the superintendent, approves the budget, develops the planning, handles the complaints, communications, and follow-through for the entire operation. Unfortunately, it is usually a short-term committee; it cannot do all of these things well. Even the strongest efforts toward long range planning and economy are often lost in the minutes and dust of the committees that

follow.

But there is hope! During a recent visit to Kitsap Golf and Country Club, Bremerton, Wash., we met H. Joseph Martin, a man who loves golf, a former green committee chairman himself and a genius at organization and detail. Joe Martin knows the trials, the time and energy requirements as well as the limitations of the Green Chairman and his committee. Realizing that short-term committees (one, two or three years) are part of the by-laws of most clubs (and short-term committees unable to accomplish long term results), he set to work to improve long range turf management economies, efficiencies, and capabilities through administrative means. His story is interesting. His proposal deserves attention.

THE KITSAP PLAN

by Joe Martin

Kitsap is like many private golf clubs throughout the nation. The Board of Directors conducts the affairs of the club to within the framework of the By-laws. At Kitsap, we are celebrating our 50th Anniversary this year, and the governing body has changed many times over the past half-century. With it, committees and chairmen have also changed. Each individual is to be commended for his work, devotion to golf and the time he has given in whatever capacity.

However, these frequent changes, in addition to peaks and valleys in the financial posture of any private club, make it virtually impossible to have continuity in improvement and development of a golf course established years ago. It follows, then, that many problem areas on the course are slow to be solved, if they are solved at all. This is usually the case no matter how well intended a committee may be.

To get at the problem of management and planning, the Board of Directors at Kitsap recently authorized the establishment of a Long Range (5-10-15-year) Improvement and Development Committee, subject to approval by the stockholders, to be a separate committee within the By-laws as follows:

Duties and Responsibilities

The Long Range Committee shall be composed of nine members, with three members selected every three years by the Committee (beginning in 1976). Vacancies to be filled as they occur. Such appointees must have knowledge of golf course problems and development. The Chairman is selected by the Committee. The current Green Chairman or a member of the Board of Directors shall be an ex-officio member of the Committee.

The function of the Committee shall be planning, designing, determining cost of future



The Kitsap plan of H. Joe Martin, a program for progress.

improvements and development of the golf course.

The Committee may solicit the assistance of The Green Section of the USGA, the annual fee to be budgeted by the Board of Directors. The Committee may employ a golf course architect or an individual of similar experience and knowledge when the need is warranted. The fee shall be included in the proposed cost of the project.

During the first meeting of the Long Range Committee, it became obvious that some problem-solving procedure had to be implemented. Without it, Committee members were discussing all 18 holes at once, and each pointed out a particular problem of personal interest. Accordingly, the Committee, by hole sequence (1 thru 18) isolated each improvement and development needed on the course. This is not to say more may not be added in the future.

Each problem was assigned a serialized indexed number. For example, I-2-4 referred to "I" for improvement; "2" designates the hole in question and "4" the numerical representation of the improvement on that hole. In this example, the Improvement relates to the 2nd Hole and turf conditions 70 to 180 yards off the tee. (Figure 1).

The same sequence applies to developments required on the course except, in this case, the first character becomes a "D" for Development. For example, D-3-1 refers to development on the 3rd Hole, Number 1 (i.e., relocation of the tee to the east). (Figure 2.) Through this procedure, an index is established and the

Committee can address discussions to any specific area of the golf course.

The Committee, armed now with an index and reference point, must prepare documentation for every one of the index numbers. A form has been developed (Figure 3) requiring essential information necessary to the 5-10-15-year Long Range Improvement and Development Program. The expense and priority placed on each item determines its place (5-10-15 years) in the program. This procedure not only has a significant advantage for the record, but more importantly, lost time, money, confusion and misunderstanding can be avoided.

Kitsap Golf & Country Club recently joined the USGA Green Section Service. During the scheduled visit of the Green Section representative, our system was put to a test. Course improvement requiring professional services were cited by index number and accompanied by a matching index form. The forms were placed in a folder for the Green Section representative to use during his visit. The Superintendent, Green Committee Chairman, and members of the Long Range Improvement and Development Committee then accompanied the Green Section representative to these specific areas. Each problem was dis-

cussed in detail, recommendations offered and recorded on the form. The visit was followed by a regular Green Section written report.

Some will say a long range program should be developed by the Green Committee and funded each year in the budget. There is nothing wrong with this approach if a golf club has the continuity of committee chairmen, committee members, board members and an annual budget to support it. However, these ideal conditions seldom apply to the average private golf club. Changes in committee personnel present a steady stream of new ideas in addition to the normal requirements of golf course maintenance. Consequently, a Long Range Improvement and Development program cannot survive a period of years necessary to complete it. The steady stream of new ideas, many of which are not supported by written professional judgement, take precedence during succeeding years. This results in maintenance inefficiency and a waste of money and talent. It is recognized that the Green Committee and Long Range Committee must have a close relationship and understanding. Any planned and funded improvement or development must ultimately be scheduled with the golf course superintendent.

INDEX	
NUMBER	IMPROVEMENT REQUIRED
I-1-1	Bare areas in back of tee
2	Tee drains
3	Clear gully in right rough
4	Black top steep part of cart path
5	Fairway drain below green
6	Add sand in bunker
7	Pull cart path to left of green is unsightly
8	Rid green of pearl wart
9	Remove stump in back of green
10	Remove rut in back of green
I-2-1	Tee needs leveling
2	Clear gully to right of tee
3	Ladies tee needs leveling
4	Turf condition 70-180 yards off tee
5	Fairway drainage 70-150 yards off tee
6	Distinction between fairway and rough
7	Clear gully above No. 18 green
8	Turf condition south and east of bunker
9	Add sand in bunker
10	Drainage in front of green
11	Bank on west of green is eroded

FIGURE 1.

I-18-1	Moles in tee area
2	Alders growth in rough
3	Erosion to right of cart path
4	Holes in fairway
5	Fairway drains
6	Turf condition to right of green
NUMBER	IMPROVEMENT REQUIRED
I-Gen-1	Temporary tees leveling
2	Fairway holes
3	Sand bunker
4	Greens
5	Temporary greens
6	Moles
NUMBER	DEVELOPMENT
D-3-1	Relocate tee to east
D-4-1	Relocate tee to east
D-6-1	Make pond into reservoir
D-10-1	Relocate tee to original location
D-10-2	Develop a practice area
D-11-1	Extend tee and fairway to south
D-11-2	Remove telephone poles
D-11-3	Install creek retaining wall
D-12-1	Extend tee 30 feet back
D-12-2	Recontour green and surrounding area

FIGURE 2.

IMPROVEMENT

Index No. 1
Started 19
Completed 19

HOLE #

IMPROVEMENT REQUIRED _____

PLAN TO IMPROVE _____

PLAN RECOMMENDED BY _____

PROFESSIONAL ARCHITECT _____ Services Required Yes _____ No _____
ENGINEER _____ Services Required Yes _____ No _____
_____ Services Required Yes _____ No _____

MAINTENANCE CREW CAPABILITY Yes No Partial
COST TO IMPROVE Professional Services \$ _____
Material \$ _____
Labor—Man Hours \$ _____
Other \$ _____
Estimated Total \$ _____

NECESSARY TIME TO IMPROVE _____ Weeks _____ Months _____ Years

MONTH(S) OF YEAR TO IMPROVE (Circle) Jan Feb Mar Apr May June
Jul Aug Sept Oct Nov Dec

YEAR & PRIORITY TO IMPROVE Year 19 Priority

HOLE CLOSED TO PLAY DURING IMPROVEMENT Yes _____ No _____ Partial _____

(Use reverse side for details or documentation)

FIGURE 3.

Other clubs are welcomed to use this procedure or a modification of it if they wish. But all areas of the golf course requiring improvement or development (no matter how insignificant) should be included in a long range improvement and development program. The sum of these will make your golf course more enjoyable to play and far more efficiently run.

In summary, the best way to move a golf maintenance program forward is to recognize the problems, put them in writing and follow through with a written *best judgment* solution. If professional services are needed, don't accept anything less. A professional judgement will be accepted by most memberships and only adds support to the Committee and Superintendent's decisions.

The Kitsap plan makes sense. It brings increased efficiency and effectiveness to long range planning. It brings support to the Superintendent in developing a sound, economical management program for tomorrow. It can save untold sums for any club!

But what about today? What about complaints?

No matter how well planned a turf management operation may be, the Green Committee will find unavoidable the day-to-day problems. Complaints from the membership represent one of the more difficult areas requiring constant attention. There are no "little complaints." The Green Committee must concern itself with making proper decisions, not necessarily popular ones.

"You can't just go on being a good egg. You either hatch or go bad."
C.S. Lewis

Millennium it would be if one could anticipate all the problems and take action before they are ever registered. That, of course, is impossible. How best, then to keep the membership happy, the budget in line and the golf course in shining condition?



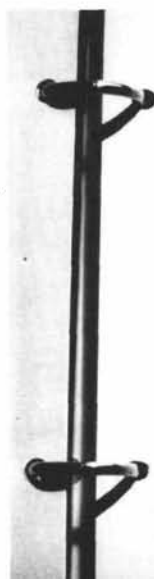
Rancho Bernardo Chairman Harry J. Schmidt.

THE RANCHO BERNADO PLAN

Harry J. Schmidt, Green Committee Chairman at the Rancho Bernardo Country Club, San Diego, Calif., has developed a most satisfying and fair solution to this age-old and often knotty problem. He has taken an old idea, added innovation and seasoning and, offers a recipe that's hard for anyone to quarrel with.

Prominently located just inside the main entrance to the club house at Rancho Bernardo stands a table holding a neat display entitled "Information—Green and Rules Committee." An attractive loose leaf book rests there and contains the latest action and decisions of the Rules and Green Committee. The display also carries a supply of "Requests or Suggestions to

An Action Sheet at Rancho Bernardo.



CASE# 6-1

PROBLEM -- HAZAROUS WHILE LEAVING GREEN

LOCATION -- 6th hole, in front of green.

DESCRIPTION --

There seems to be a strong tendency on the part of members to park carts near the front of the green and on the cart path to the right. This causes them to walk from the green to their carts after playing the hole in a path that is hazardous because of opening shots. A member suggested that while this hazard may have to be accepted on some holes because no alternate path is readily available, this is not true at the 6th.

The proposal is to ask that members park their carts to the right rear of the hole and use the back portion of the green as an exit path. The green would therefore be cleared somewhat faster and considerably safer from impatient shots that exceed in distance the player's expectations.

RECOMMENDATION --

The committee agrees in the merit of the suggestion. Accordingly an appropriate sign has been prepared and installed designating the preferred location for parking carts while putting. It is believed this will not require any more steps on the part of our golfers but it will add considerable to their safety.

APPROVALS ---

Greens Committee 2-10-74

Completed 3-19-74

the Green Committee." (Please see Figure 4.)

Chairman Schmidt believes that if a member's complaint has any validity, it should be presented to the Green Committee in written form. Only written "Requests or Suggestions" come to the Committee's attention and everyone of them receives an answer!

If the problem is a routine one, Schmidt relays the Committee's action directly to the member by telephone.

If the problem is of major concern, the Green Committee prepares a recommendation for the Board of Directors and the Board then takes final action. If its decision is of general interest or concern to the entire membership, an "Action Sheet" is prepared and included in the loose leaf book. The "Action Sheet" may be quite detailed (if warranted), giving both pro and con on the question. Thus, Green Committee decisions affecting the membership are current, official, and readily available to every member. The Action Sheets represent the feedback on important questions. More importantly, however, they form a history and an ongoing record of decisions for the next Green Committee.

The Rancho Bernardo Green Committee is

comprised of five members, plus course Superintendent Gary Silor. It meets once monthly and always one week before the Board of Directors meeting. Chairman Schmidt reports that most of the suggestions and/or complaints originate with the Green Committee itself. "This is as it should be if the Committee is doing its job," he states. "But the written requests from the members receive our first attention. We reach a decision as soon as practicable, prepare the reply, and feed it back as soon as we can. The system has really worked well for us."

The Ultimate Benefactor

And so in this era of high costs we find more and more clubs concerning themselves with better administration of the club's business and money. In the field of turfgrass management, this means not only a dedicated and knowledgeable course superintendent but also more Green Committees and Long Range Planning and Improvement Committees willing to make an effort on behalf of their club. Committeemen willing to give sound business-like judgments in addition to their membership dues. The ultimate benefactor is the game itself.

REQUEST OR SUGGESTION TO THE GREEN COMMITTEE

Submitted by _____ Date _____

Item submitted:

Your recommendation:

Any member wishing consideration of any matter within the responsibility of the Green Committee should do so by means of this form.

Submit to any committee member or to the club office.

Received by: _____ Green Committee: _____ Course Supt. _____

Action Notes:

FIGURE 4.