



The ninth hole on the West Course at Winged Foot Golf Club during play of the 1974 United States Open Championship.

Streamlining the Club Operation— A Club Official's View

by EDWARD T. SCHNEIDER, President, Winged Foot Golf Club, New York

(The following was prepared from an outline and notes taken during Mr. Schneider's presentation at the Green Section Education Meeting on January 24, 1975. Editor)

Club officials can and must play a vital role if club operations are to be streamlined. This is my second year as President of Winged Foot and it has been a great privilege and experience. We could never have successfully staged the 1974 United States Open Championship without a proper spirit of communication and cooperation within our club. Each Board member's own expertise came into play, as well as each of our department heads; i.e., the golf course superintendent, the golf professional and the club manager, all coordinated by the general manager.

In my opinion, one of the most powerful and important committees at any club is the nominating committee. It holds the key to the club's future. It is the selection of new Board members that forges the operational policy of

the club. Unfortunately, nominating committees I have seen in various other organizations frequently become very cliquish. A friend wants to be on the Board and so he is nominated. The committee doesn't really check into his qualifications and determine what he can contribute to the club's needs.

I was invited to speak to our Nominating Committee at Winged Foot before it chose new Board members. The objective was to provide our Board of Governors with individuals having particular talents useful to the club. For example, there are seven or eight categories of special interest:

Public Relations—It's awfully important to have PR men in any organization, and especially at a golf club. They know how to handle matters properly. There are two ways of writing a letter and the PR man knows how to explain a point in a prudent and professional manner. He can eliminate a tremendous number of problems.

Lawyers—Of course, you do need attorneys. They can insure that things are done legally and in their right order.

Engineers and Plant Maintenance—Engineers and plant maintenance specialists on the Board contribute to long-range technical planning, to the maintenance of the physical plant, to a review of equipment maintenance requirements, heating units, plumbing facilities, etc. They can eliminate many long-range problems.

Insurance—Another extremely important category in any club operation today is insurance. Unfortunately, I can tell you of the fire we had in a grill room in 1973 with the United States Open coming up in 1974! The possible problems from such a catastrophe could make you nervous. But with professional people involved, the claim settlement was easily and properly done.

Restaurant—We have had people in the restaurant business on our Board and they have been of tremendous help in exchanging their experience and thoughts with the manager.

Practical Businessmen—This type of individual can be very helpful in planning and insuring that the club doesn't do something too extreme only to regret at a later date.

CPA and Financial Experience—Of course, someone with a financial background can guide the club in matters of money, tax situations, etc.

A funny thing happens at a club, I find, when we ask a member to serve on the Board. He is just delighted to do so and we rest easier knowing its going to be done in a proper way.

In a number of cases, two men at Winged Foot with similar professional backgrounds may serve on the Board at the same time. If there is a difference of opinion, what better approach is there than having two individuals from the same discipline come to an agreement or compromise made in the best interest of their club? The entire Board can then make the best possible decision.

Continuity within the Board of Governors is

also essential so that there is the continuing flow and direction given to important decision making. I was interested in an article which appeared in *Golfdom* Magazine several years ago by Richard L. Viergever, then superintendent at the Olympic Club, San Francisco, Calif. He stated in part;

Many clubs operate haphazardly. This is not surprising although of course it is wrong. The average club is run by a Board of Directors composed of businessmen who are engaged full time in making a living of their own and cannot afford to take the time required to run their clubs efficiently. This of course puts a premium on the management qualities of the three department heads common to most larger clubs.

When the organization is set up properly, the professional, superintendent and manager should get together frequently to discuss the overall operation of the club; each with full knowledge of his responsibilities as well as those of the other two executives, and with no dissention or jealousy, but with a spirit of full cooperation. This is the only way that first class management can be attained. When this is the case, the club directors and committees can then spend a minimum of time running the club and still get maximum enjoyment from all facilities. The members will get more value per dollar spent regardless of the size of their budget or the membership."

At Winged Foot, we operate under a general manager concept. The course superintendent, club manager, golf professional, and the general manager hold frequent meetings. Communications are excellent and cooperation between all department heads is a vital factor in the successful operation of any club.