



What's Going On in the Field

PANEL MEMBERS:

Holman M. Griffin, Mid-Atlantic Director
James B. Moncrief, Southern Director
F. Lee Record, Mid-Continent Director
Carl Schwartzkopf, USGA Agronomist
Stanley J. Zontek, USGA Agronomist

MODERATOR:

Wm. H. Bengueyfield, Western Director and
Green Section Publications Editor

Bengueyfield: Gentlemen, our topic is "Economy Measures for Survival." As you travel this country, how much do you find golf clubs are planning to cut back on their 1975 budgets?

Moncrief: There is no question in my mind that most golf course maintenance budgets are going to remain status quo at best in 1975, if not actually reduced. Both resort and private courses are still going to provide the very best they can in actual playing conditions and quality, but the bloom is off the rose. Overall, I hear of budget cuts from 10 per cent to 20 per cent.

Record: In the Midwest we hear the figure of 10 per cent to 12 per cent budget cuts for a number of golf course maintenance programs. This may be accomplished either by using less manpower on the course, by cutting down on maintenance requirements such as narrow fairways (more roughs cut less often), less raking and general maintenance of bunkers, and greater use of labor saving equipment.

Zontek: An increasing shift to greater mechanization and smaller maintenance crews is definitely underway. And the manufacturers of equipment should be commended for the leadership they are providing. We now have aerators, top-dressing machines, sprayers, mist blowers and mechanical bunker rakes all able to move faster and get the job done more efficiently.

Schwartzkopf: Greater productivity of the worker is the key to maintaining good turf within a reasonable budget. For example, not every one may feel the triplex putting green mower is the greatest thing to ever happen to greens. But one man does get the job done

quickly and the machine is ideal for Saturday and Sunday use on greens. It also does an excellent job of vertical mowing and spiking the greens as well as regular mowing of tees! Because this machine increases productivity, it must be a "plus" piece of equipment.

Griffin: When discussing budgets, I frequently hear club officials and green chairmen comparing their course budget with the club down the road or others in their area. They seek an average figure and then compare their costs to it. But before this technique is followed in judging whether a budget is too high or too low, you might consider that an average budget will give you an average golf course. But even this is not necessarily true. There are hundreds of items that can cause a budget disparity from one course to another. Chevrolet and Cadillac are both General Motors products with a great many essential features in common. They do somewhat the same job, but there is a vast difference in initial cost, cost of maintenance and class. This analogy applies just as well to golf courses. The style you maintain is directly proportionate to the amount of money spent.

Bengeyfield: To pursue the labor situation a bit further, what are you finding in regard to women workers on golf courses?

Zontek: Female golf course workers, once a rarity in the Northeast, are now becoming more and more common. Because golf course work is quite seasonal and manual labor jobs in other industries frequently pay more, the male labor pool is often limited. Female labor on the other hand is usually available, and at prevailing country club wage scales, is in many cases higher than a woman can command as a waitress, counter clerk or even a typist. Remember, women deserve and should get, by right and by law, equal pay for equal work. The woman job pool is made up of those looking to supplement their family income, women who like outdoor work and more and more frequently, college women who have graduated in horticulture or agronomy and are seeking practical experience in their field. Where female workers have been employed on golf courses, their work has been reported as generally very efficient, neat, reliable and conscientious.

Bengeyfield: 1975 is going to test the talents of the golf course superintendent in many ways. One of them is the fertilizer shortage. What are your views on it?

Moncrief: The overall fertilizer situation, as far as I can see, will not be much different from what it was in 1974—high prices and still a tight supply. Golf courses are definitely cutting back on nitrogen use. The talk of controlling and channeling all fertilizers into farm crop production is disturbing to say the least. According to the Fertilizer Institute, Washington, D.C., only 3 per cent of all fertilizers used in the United States go into non-farm use. Of this amount, less than 1 per cent is concerned with turfgrass production.

Robert Steiner of the U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization says the real problem is that the developing nations are broke and shipping costs are the main issue.

Schwartzkopf: The smart superintendent will anticipate his needs and take delivery whenever the material becomes available. Use soil tests to determine P and K needs and, if possible, make maximum use of effluents and sludges.

Record: Along that line, when fertilizers became short in 1974, superintendents began thinking of what alternatives they might use to help tide them over until the situation was once again stable.

One superintendent in Northern Illinois turned to his City's waste water treatment plant to see if the activated sewage sludge which they had would be available; it was. Over 100 cubic yards of material was brought to his maintenance area and stockpiled for fall use. The sludge, which was digested by the aerobic method, was very odor free and in granular form.

The analysis of the sludge was 1.7 per cent nitrogen, .89 per cent phosphorous and 1.6 per cent iron. Heavy metals such as cadmium, mercury, etc., were not of concern; a city technician checks daily for their toxic levels. When fall came he applied one pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet to the rough areas; approximately 2,600 pounds per acre. There was a problem with debris found in the sludge. However, at the moment, the superintendent feels the positive aspects of this fertilizer source outweigh the problems. The results of his endeavors will begin to show in 1975. Will he continue using this material in roughs for the future? I believe so. As far as using the material on fairways, tees or greens is concerned, it is not practical to do so because of the tightly mowed turf.

Griffin: There are many ideas which come up from time to time for saving money, but most of these are dependent upon an additional outlay of cash to obtain greater savings. Take the fellow who needs two business suits and sees a sale on \$200 suits for half-price. The two suits he needs cost \$200, which means he has also saved \$200. If he buys ten suits, he can be the best dressed man in town and save \$1,000! The trick here is to establish the real need and

supply that need with merchandise at the best possible price. If he only needs two suits, the \$1,000 "saving" is really excessive spending. What we are really looking for is a means of cutting maintenance costs that are more or less fixed while still maintaining or improving the quality of our operation.

Bengeyfield: Thank you gentlemen, our time is up.



Utilization of all water sources is becoming necessary.