

How to Keep A Well Trained Crew

By CHESTER MENDENHALL

Member, USGA Green Section Committee, Superintendent, Mission Hills Country Club,
Prairie Village, Kansas

In trying to keep a well-trained crew on a golf course, you have many hurdles to overcome.

I think you can list them in this order: Working hours or time, salary, permanence of employment, fringe benefits and retirement. Today the trend is toward a shorter work week. Golf course workers today, like industrial workmen, want to work only a forty hour week, and they would much rather not do any part of the forty hours on Saturday or Sunday. This creates a real problem, as it is hard to convince the grass that it should only grow the first five days of the week, and then go two days without mowing or water. It seems to me we have no other alternative other than to meet the challenge of a shorter work week head-on. This means employing every labor saving technique and device possible, and then alternating the working time of employees so that some men are on duty at all times. You will always have a few men who are eager to work extra hours to increase their income. However, there are not many golf clubs with budgets that will stand much overtime, at time and a half or double time. So it boils down to this: give your key men who would like to have extra work as much Saturday and Sunday work as you can. Most of your crew will be much happier working a forty hour week.

The Salary Problem

Salaries are a big problem, especially around industrial areas. Few clubs are willing to meet the pay scale of industrial plants. This is a big handicap in securing golf course labor. The available workers are older men, handicapped men, men with below normal aptitude, a few men who are not adaptable to assembly line work, and some who like to be out of doors. The latter men are the ones that fit into golf course work best.

After you find a desirable man, the next thing is to give him steady employment. This is a problem, and sometimes it becomes a matter of creating work. However, there are improvements that

can be made during the off-season that will greatly reduce some of the work during the summer season. This is not creating work, but taking advantage of the time of well qualified men during the winter months.

Assign Interesting Work

If a man is given work that is interesting to him, he will do a good day's work under adverse conditions. The superintendent should know something about the special skills of his workmen and have a good knowledge of all types of work to be done. The men should be assigned work that interests them most. Then in answer to the question "Does it pay to make work during the off-season for good men," the answer is "yes."

We are all aware that it costs money to train men, and that to train a man in all-round maintenance takes more than one season. A club should keep a sufficient number of men year-round to fill the lead positions. However there are few clubs that are in a position to make work for their entire summer crew. This means most of us have to depend on some seasonal help. We have found that our best seasonal helpers have been college men. These men are alert and understand instructions. Most of them are interested in gaining knowledge, as well as earning money to carry on their education.

Women Can Help

Women too are excellent workers. There are a good many jobs around a club they can do as well as men. They are neat in appearance and in their work. If they like outside work, they are good gardeners. They all drive cars and can soon be trained to handle tractors and riding mowers as well as men.

As for fringe benefits and retirement, this is a matter that has received very little consideration at most golf clubs, but it is something that we must consider as we strive to meet the competition of industry for good men.

Tell Men About Benefits

If your club offers any fringe benefits, such as sick leave, paid vacations, retirement, be sure your employees know what they are. They should know when they are eligible and what they can expect.

I think keeping a well trained crew starts with the first interview you have with a prospective employee. The interview should be frank and directly to the point. Try to find out something about the character and temperament of the man, and then you will have some idea whether he will fit into your present crew. Let him know what the working conditions at your club are, and what you will expect of him. I think if this first interview is well conducted, a new man will come on the job with respect for you, your other employees and the club members. I think this is the first step toward a satisfied employee.

The careful selection of new employees is very important. I think most every club spends several hundred dollars each year training new employees. If a new employee only stays two months or less, his training is a complete loss to the club.

Training Program Vital

To carry out an economical and effective training program is a matter of great

importance. At our club a new employee is handed what we like to call an employee's training guide. This is a brief explanation of most of the operations in ground maintenance, including the club house yard, tennis courts, and courtesies to members, as well as the golf course work.

The men are encouraged to take the brief home, read it, and then ask questions about it. We feel each man should understand something about the entire operation, even though he may work in only a small portion of the general operation.

As soon as we have our crew together in the spring, we start holding a discussion period two or three mornings each week. We discuss the work we are doing at that time with the entire crew present. We ask for questions and suggestions from the men. We hope in this way to create interest in the work and to try to make each man feel he is a part of the whole maintenance operation.

We feel a well-informed crew soon becomes a well trained crew and that a well informed man will take a greater interest in what he is doing. The more interest he has in the work, the more likely he is to become a satisfied employee.

The Golf Course Worker — His Relations With the Membership

By A. M. RADKO

Eastern Director, USGA Green Section

Whenever the situation exists that two persons on the same property are pursuing different objectives, there is every chance for friction unless each employs a great deal of tact and judgment. In the member-worker relationship of the golf course set-up several touchy situations can arise because the member in one sense is the employer—the golf course worker the employee; the member out for pleasure—the employee is there to work; the employee of necessity uses equipment that is noisy—the golfer wants quiet. These and numerous other matters, similarly extreme, could and do arise which make it imperative that there be some rules and regulations, defined or understood, as a basis for relations be-

tween the worker and the member. The worker receives his instruction from the Golf Course Superintendent; the member normally through various responsible committees. The golf course set-up is like most other organizations in that there are normal channels of authority that each should pursue in working toward any objective. The channels of authority are clearly defined and though they might vary slightly from club to club, they usually follow from the President to the Board of Governors to the Committees to the Chairmen, to the Superintendent to the employee. These channels of authority should be followed. Otherwise, embarrassing or serious consequences could result.