



November 1978

*Golf Course Superintendents Association*

OF NEW ENGLAND, INC.

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## Scrutinize That Small Print

Whether you're a budget-booster or a budget-slasher, the condition of your golf course depends much more on that small print above the most overrated item on any list of expenditures - the bottom line.

Talk to your nearest superintendent (yourself, if the situation applies) and you'll find that too much emphasis is placed on the final figure in the formation of the golf course's annual budget. That super is often hoodwinked into the assumption that the bottom line dictates the performance of his duties. And, more often than not, the attempt to meet the limitations mandated by the overall outlay figure results in cutting corners enroute to unsatisfactory and unwanted conditions.

The trouble with most country club financial officers is that they work from the bottom up in blueprinting the costs for course upkeep and improvement. That is, they come into the budget meeting with a set total figure and work out the details of conditioning expenses with the thought of holding it to come hell or high fairways and greens.

Examples of such stubborn insistence on restricting the superintendent to a set overall figure abound. Conversely, there are instances when the club shows its strength in adjusting to circumstances beyond the control of the super. Whenever a conditioning crisis appears, you can be sure that the bottom line proponents will wind up with a course far inferior to its grooming potential.

Case in point: Course A provides for an emergency fund to handle unusual weather developments. That fund provides additional money for goods and services - perhaps an extra shot of fertilizer and increased manpower to control an expected new growth of grasses. Course B ignores the drastic weather change and refuses to implement the measures so necessary to keep the normal course conditioning cycle in operation. The result is elementary. Course A's golfers enjoy an uninterrupted season of perfect playing conditions. Course B's members run to the superintendent and wonder why they've been shortchanged.

Another deterrent to the efforts of the superintendent - and tied into the over-dependence on grooming by the bottom line - is a hairy subject. It is the practice of price-fixing, a practice which makes the super's job a study in frustration.

The fixing usually is centered on the rate of pay superintendents are forced to live with on the labor market. A quick survey - a spot check to be sure and not without challenging asides - reveals that many supers must depend on help willing to work for the minimum wage or thereabouts. It is not uncommon for people - mowing greens and setting cups to come away with \$2.75 an hour. Under such uninviting terms, the turnover in manpower is immeasurable.

Obviously, a rotating or revolving work force constitutes a severe threat to the normal flow of duties and responsibilities trusted to it. Like most jobs, there is a break-in period - a learning process involved in completing the most trivial task on a golf course. This not only increases the time required to complete the particular job, it is a drain on the availability of the superintendent. Unless he has the luxury of hiring a capable and responsible assistant - another starred item in that small print - to oversee the implementation of new help, the course is deprived of his attention and expertise in what could be more

pressing matters.

The small print. It involves a myriad of seemingly simple aspects of the budget. But does it provide for safeguard measures against a sudden outbreak of turf disease? Is there something included in it which gives the super a fighting chance to overcome the damage wrought by an overnight change in weather conditions? Does it allow him to offer a wage conducive to luring responsible workers to his course? Is there a provision to replace a piece of equipment that breaks down without any warning? In other words, can he survive an emergency?

If the budget has been arranged with only one goal in mind - that to hold firm to a bottom line which is often an estimate made with nothing more than blind foresight, your golf course lies in the danger zone and is susceptible to conditioning failure. And such approach places an unjust burden on the superintendent who needs all the feasible support he can get in his greening and grooming endeavors.

Gerry Finn

### Tournament Results from Foxboro Country Club

First Place	Mel O'Kelly	Bob Connally
	Joe Rybka	Ed Wiacik
Second Place	Gary Luccinni	Ron Kirkman
	John Dolan	Norm Mucciaroni
Third Place	Juli Aksten	Wayne Zoppo
	Tony Caranci	Steve Murphy

### NEXT MEETING

#### Annual Meeting

Dec. 4, 1978

#### Franklin Country Club

Director's Meeting 10:00 a.m.  
Lunch 12:00 (Available at club)  
Membership Meeting 1:00 p.m.  
Elections to be held.

#### DIRECTIONS:

From Rte. 495 take King St. Exit to Rte. 140. Take right and club is about 1 mile on Rte. 140. From Rte. 95 take Rte. 1 South exit. Off Rte. 1 take Rte. 140 to Franklin. Club is on Rte. 140.

NOTE: Special thanks to our host superintendent Gary Luccini and the members of Franklin Country Club for allowing us the use of their facilities for our meeting. It is most appreciated.

# Farmer's Almanac Predicts Cold Winter

DUBLIN, N.H. — Don't be fooled by a mild November and forget to get out your long woolies: it's going to be a long, cold winter, warns Abe Weatherwise, the crusty meteorological soothsayer at the Old Farmer's Almanac.

In today's 187th edition of the nation's oldest continuing publication, Abe cautions that despite a mild beginning, the coming winter offers no reprieve from its bone-chilling predecessors.

The almanac may have a folksy exterior, but it was only six days off in predicting the "Blizzard of 1978," and was considered accurate enough in 1944 to be banned by the U.S. government for fear the enemy would gather weather information from it.

The team of forecasters, who write under Abe's pseudonym, predict Thanksgiving week of 1978 will introduce a string of cold waves East of the Mississippi, which will segue into another major snowstorm at the end of January 1979 "to remind us of last winter."

The central part of the country is in for an even worse fate with "exceptional cold waves" for the Central and Great Plains states with "near-blizzard conditions" through February.

The venerable 192-page publication predicts the weather with a claimed accuracy of 80 percent. It was first published in George Washington's time.

"People want us to be accurate," says Judson Hale, 12th almanac editor. "Everybody pulls for the almanac. We're in the enviable position that if we're right, everybody's happy. And if we are wrong, they just ignore us."

The almanac says the South will experience cold waves "as far south as central Florida" beginning in December and have an above-normal snowfall this winter. It also warns that heavy rains in January in southern Appalachia could mean extensive flooding.

For skiers, the almanac predicts an ample snowfall in the Rocky Mountains, with late April snowfalls for the entire West. The central part of the country will get a lot of snow in February. The East, in spite of cold weather, will not experience the abundance of snow which has fallen the last two winters.

The almanac also predicts a late spring, with rain and a danger of flooding for much of the country, then warns of sparse rain from June until August, coupled with high temperatures, which could cause a severe drought in the Great Plains.

The Almanac, first distributed in 1792 by Robert B. Thomas is published every fall in an 18th Century house and two connecting barns in the small New Hampshire town of Dublin, not far from the Massachusetts border.

Originally printed to help the farmer prepare for snowstorms, drought, and other natural disasters, the almanac - packed full of trivia, planting tables, animal gestation period charts, zodiac secrets and 16 regional weather forecasts - now reaches an estimated 3.2 million persons.

Its technique of predicting weather based on a series of cycles - observing sun spots, phases of the moon, and the currents of the Atlantic Ocean off Labrador - has yet to be taken seriously by professional meteorologists.

But the professionals could take heed from some of the almanac's recent successes. The slim yellow volume was dead accurate in its predictions of abnormally cold winters for the past two years and correctly forecasted a major snowstorm that became the blizzard of 1978. Hale explained that the blizzard should have hit the Northeast at the end of January but was delayed.

The publishers of the almanac stress the word old in its title to distinguish it from another almanac in Maine, which has only been publishing for 163 years.

Credit: Greenwich Times, October 16, 1978

**TO BE VOTED** at the next meeting Stephen Chiavaroli, superintendent at Tatnuck Country Club. To be voted an Associate Member.

**TO BE VOTED** at the next meeting Ed Eardley, superintendent at Wampatuk Country Club. To be voted a Junior Associate Member.

## JOB OPENINGS

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Five to ten years experience and a degree in agronomy.

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Fall River Country club, Fall River, Mass.

Golf Course Superintendent 18 holes

Send Resume to:  
Ed Keyes  
74 Woodland Dr.  
Somerset, Mass. 02726

## SLATE of OFFICERS for 1979

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Respectfully submitted by  
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## Golf for Golfers, Only

An eye-catching piece appeared in a recent issue of the USGA Golf Journal. And after a digestive reading of same, it becomes eye-awakening to those of us immersed in what has become a seemingly great American institution - the country club.

James Finegan - a dandy with the descriptive - wrote the lyrics. The music was provided by the Royal Ashdown Forest Golf Club, a unique playground located on the outskirts of London, England.

What makes Royal Ashdown an interesting study in contrast to the typical country club in the United States is its physical makeup and practical approach to operational costs. Obviously, it would never make it on this side of the Atlantic. For one thing, the members wouldn't stand for it.

Royal Ashdown, according to Finegan, is a truly superb layout and a challenging test for those who prefer their hazards built-in naturally rather than being manufactured. It has no bunkers, its fairways are mowed twice a month or so and its rough is allowed to grow as high and thick as nature intends.

It is, indeed, a golf course for golfers, only. And there is hardly a day when members fail to take advantage of its adventurous appeal. A check of club records reveals that Royal Ashdown was closed one day in 1925 because of the death of Edward VII. And in 1936 play was suspended to observe the funeral of King George V. As Finegan paints such example of exaggerated addiction to a sport, "you have to applaud a club that permits only a day of national mourning to interfere with the game."

Since there are no sand traps, the task of maintaining the course is eased considerably and results in a tremendous saving of man-hours. When a player strays from the fairway, he finds himself in heather-gorse-bracken or sandy roadways. Mr. R. L. Griffith, Ashdown's secretary, pours more fodder into the course's less-demanding conditioning process by noting of the above perilous strips: "We never tend to any of that."

In reality, the only regular grooming at Ashdown occurs in the cutting of greens and tees. The trimming of the fairways is treated as a virtual incidental on the maintenance schedule and as Mr. Griffith further observes: "The fairways are not the lush carpets you Americans are used to."

Turning to the real shocker, Mr. Griffith reveals the astonishing fees Ashdown requires from its select membership of 167 (it is not unusual for an applicant to wait seven years for approval). The dues (for a husband and wife) were just raised to ninety-two pounds. On the basis of the most recent rate of exchange, that is but one hundred and eighty dollars a year. In the U.S. and other spots around the world, there are some golf resorts who charge that much for a day's stay.

Thus, the operating budget at Ashdown accounts for the ridiculous cost to a member. . . that and the elimination of the amenities (trappings was Mr. Griffith's first thought) in the clubhouse.

There is only dinner at Ashdown - the annual dinner at Easter time. That is the only occasion when members can sit down to an evening meal. A hot lunch is usually provided and tea - as late as 6 o'clock - can be arranged if members insist. The club steward and his wife constitute the entire clubhouse staff and according to Mr. Griffith: "They actually don't have all that much to do."

Compare Ashdown, then, with the typical country club setting in the United States. In Finegan's words, the golf course is every bit as picturesque and demanding as the layouts he frequents at home. But there the similarity comes to an abrupt halt. Although Ashdown is a cultivator for social life and occasional business association, its principal function is to provide an in-



Superintendent John Forest on the right and Pro Curt Sokolowski of Meadow Brook, winners of the John Shanahan Memorial Tournament.

teresting and enjoyable golfing grounds for members who prefer sport and recreation without the frills.

Is it possible for such an operation to succeed here? Probably not. The country club (American style) has grown far beyond the boundaries of its original purpose and has evolved into an expensive substitute for home, place of business and focal point of socializing. Then, too, its golf course has taken on a showcase appearance and adherence to impeccable condition. Its offering of goods and services have risen to such a luxurious plane that they now are considered the rule where once they were the exception.

Yet, golf at Royal Ashdown stands as an uncomplicated alternative - available only to those whose practicality perseveres through an otherwise tinsel and plastic world.

Gerry Finn

## Letters to the Editor

2nd October 1978  
Agronomics Arabia, Ltd.  
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

Dear Larry,

Thanks for forwarding the newsletters to me. Although I know of the problems of poa and bentgrass fairways, I thought you would like to know of the problems occurring on the other side of the world.

Average daily temperatures run between 115 and 126°F and humidity between 50-65% (As you may anticipate I do not have any problems with bluegrass infestation) but now it is a difficult ball game, PH here runs between 8.0 - 8.5 and salt levels run from 2000 and 2500 ppm. We are using purrwick extensively as we are recycling effluent for irrigation purposes. Needless to say there is never a dull moment, but I am continuously amazed at how well Bermuda grass does here.

Hope everything is well with you and please give my best to all in the New England Association.

Best Regards,  
Gregg Deegan CGCS

**CONGRATULATIONS to JOHN PLUTA,**  
superintendent at Westover Golf Club who  
was voted an Associate Member.

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\* Contributors to the Lawrence S. Dickinson Scholarship Fund

# NEWSLETTER

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