

NEWSLETTER

January, 1980



Golf Course Superintendents Association
OF NEW ENGLAND, INC.

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Country Club Comeback

The woods are full of negative noises, noises designed to drum out the country club as a sustaining force in the sports-recreational life of the American family. They just might be premature.

Nowadays, the popular outlook for the future of the country club paints a picture of doom. Rising prices, spiraling inflation and broad economic doctrines of despair are being presented as a means of scaring the so-called "upper middle and middle class" members of society into believing they can't afford country club life.

Such warning, plus the bleak-appearing financial structure of the typical country club, makes one wonder if life outside the home-office environment is in a period of regression. Some skeptics have reached the stage where they predict that golf -- as played in the country club setting -- soon will shrink to the point where it is available only to the rich.

Roy Mackintosh, the energetic and enterprising superintendent-manager of Longmeadow's Twin Hills Country Club, is in complete disagreement with this theory. In fact, he professes a cautious but firm belief that the economic-energy crisis syndrome, enveloping the United States, could find its way toward benefiting the cause of country club living.

"At Twin Hills, we are undergoing a drastic reversal in matter of projecting the future of our club," he reveals. "Don't get me wrong. We're still trying to hold the line regarding budgets and the like. But we're in the midst of offering present and potential members an extension of the facilities and services that are available to them now."

Twin Hills started the expansion program last year with the building of four additional tennis courts and the start of a cross country skiing venture. "We were very successful with the tennis improvements," Mackintosh discloses. "The lack of snow hindered the cross country skiing effort. But we got out of the preliminary class by converting part of a building into a cross country pro shop, staked out the courts and purchased equipment. This year, we'll be ready to roll just as soon as there is an appreciable snowfall."

Obviously, there had to be financial outlay for such an undertaking. But the task was completed without sending the membership into a deep hole. Overall, Twin Hills wound up with a minimal loss in its operational prospective. The increase in facilities to members, though, more than made up for it.

Mackintosh has unshakeable faith in the future of the country club as the main source of recreation for the family. And he bases such faith on simple budgetary mathematics.

"Take the average family of four people," he offers. "They take a vacation sometime during the year and the cost is staggering. If they can get away with spending less than, say \$2,000, they've really done something. Not only that. In taking a trip, they have contributed to the energy crisis in that they either soak up fuel by driving to their destination or traveling by air or rail.

"If they took that same \$2,000 and invested it in a country club



membership, they'd be way ahead of the game. I mean, how can they overlook the opportunity to have a wide range of recreational facilities at their feet...the year-round? Well, look at our situation. We can offer members golf, tennis and swimming in the summer and cross country skiing in the winter...all for the all encompassing cost of a couple of thousand. Do I sound like a salesman? I hope so."

Using the country club as an alternative for the family's annual vacation makes more sense than meets the eye. Naturally, the "get away from it all" enticement is eliminated. However, the security of knowing that all country club facilities and the enjoyment from using them is guaranteed. Thus, the club becomes an enticement in itself.

Mackintosh, then, is convinced that the country club is far from becoming an endangered species. "Naturally, we must convince our members, as well as those prospective members hesitant to join, that the country club offers them their best vacation 'bargain,'" Mackintosh stresses. "Again, it's a matter of conditioning the members and educating the prospective members. And the best way to do that is a form of display advertising. What they see is what they get. And, as far as I'm concerned, there's a lot to be gotten at Twin Hills."

So, the country club should not be looked upon as a dying form of recreation and entertainment for the masses. In fact, it could be making a strong comeback if those guiding its future broaden the attraction it holds.

Gerry Finn

Next Meeting

ANNUAL MEETING

**Franklin C.C.
January 7, 1980**

Directors Meeting 10:30 A.M.

Regular Meeting 11:30 A.M.

Lunch 12 Noon

Voting 1 P.M.

Delegates and a dues increase will be voted on.

Golf Course Superintendents Association

Just Press a Button, Ey?

Two modes of golf course conditioning present a contrasting arrangement as the age of technology slowly but surely threatens to turn the task of the superintendent into a push-button world.

There still exists in far-away Monaco, a golf course which depends on some antiquated, yet effective means of keeping playing conditions at their very best. The method is so unique that it boggles the minds of golfers visiting the gambler's retreat.

Fairways are mowed by sheep. That's right, sheep. Each morning a shepherd takes his flock and dogs to a prescribed place and begins the daily cutting. The process is well designed in that it follows a set schedule as a certain number of fairways get their trimming on a rotating basis.

"It's really something to see," one visitor tells. "The herd cuts a perfect path down the fairway and the restraining dogs see to it that it doesn't stray onto greens or other unwanted places. Not only that, at the same time the fairways are being fertilized... by natural means."

The sheep cutting and fertilizing is an on-going thing, too. And it serves two purposes. First, it cuts down considerably on human output in maintenance. Second, it keeps the sheep fed and in good health. The results, according to our informer, are incredible. "The only drawback is a technicality," he laughs. "Sometimes, your golf ball may rest in a pile of fertilizer. But there are local rules which give you a free drop. Otherwise, the process goes on without a hitch."

Compare this with what is approaching automated conditioning in the United States and other countries which come up short on sheep.

With advancements in the properties of automatic irrigation systems, the American superintendent could see the day - very soon, too - when the chore of watering and fertilization fairways and greens is initiated with one press of the button.

Some superintendents already have tried the combination method with success. And it holds many advantages.

"Let's face it," one super remarked. "Everything around us is going into the computer and coming out a completed job. It's only a matter of time before we'll be doing the same thing. In the long run, it has to be a saving and a form of assurance that the job will result in uniform watering and fertilizing. It will present a cutback in labor, but this isn't all that bad when you consider that our restricted financial offerings to part-time help are a drawback in obtaining adequate workers."

Automation, mechanization... or whatever you choose to call it... already has shown itself on the golf course with the introduction and acceptance of the golf car. The golf car has, in most cases, eliminated the caddy. What's more, it has enhanced its presence as a country club fixture by becoming one of the club's main sources of revenue.

"I think that automation is the answer to many of our problems," the same superintendent proposed. "I'm not suggesting that our jobs will boil down to something resembling a data processing project. We're still going to need a labor force. However, it will be trimmed down to working size to the point where we won't have to depend on part-time help. We'll be able to establish a full time staff which will insure us of tackling the conditioning problem on an uninterrupted basis."

Of course, even without the irrigation-fertilization combination, the maintenance movement is headed toward utilization of more machinery and less manual labor. Equipment is being streamlined to make for a quick-action type of mowing fairways and greens. Trap maintenance has been reduced to a virtual one-man operation. And the rest of the spruce-up process could

be an invention or two away from complete technical dependence.

How will this affect the superintendent who clings to the old school methods and advocates a head-in-the-sand approach to anything upsetting those methods?

"It already has," another super reported. "Some of us are adapting to a modern design maintenance program, perhaps without even realizing it. Years ago no one thought a golf course worker would hop on a mower and zip over a fairway in record time. But, outside of those sheep in Monaco, everyone's resigned to the fact that improved equipment has contributed to the stabilizing of the golf course's playing condition. If anyone hasn't, he's not in the same business as me."

That same super, though, is quick to qualify the complete automation suggestion. "There always will be a need for the superintendent and a certain amount of qualified help on the course," he insisted. "Because, like everything, automation is not perfect. Experience and know-how, the human kind, can't be replaced by machines. I'd say it will be a combination of the two. It's coming and we can't stop it. So, I propose that the superintendent get ready for it. One day we'll be pressing buttons... the right ones, I hope."
Gerry Finn

Connecticut Association of Golf Course Superintendents 1980 Turf Grass Seminar

Tuesday, January 22, 1980
9:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M.
\$10.00 per person
(lunch included)

Holiday Inn of Hartford
50 Morgan Street
Hartford, Conn.
(junction of routes 84 & 91)
Free Parking Available

Speakers/Topics

Dr. Joseph Troll - University of
Massachusetts
"Research Projects and Findings at
UMass

Dr. Richard Skogley - University of
Rhode Island
"Grass Varieties and Their Uses"

Dr. Richard Smiley - Cornell Univer-
sity
"Effects of Fungicides on Non-Target
Soil Organisms"

Dr. Stephen Hitchcock - State of
Connecticut Pesticide Compliance
"Pesticide & Regulations Update

Mr. Ron Weseloh - Connecticut Agri-
cultural Experiment Station
"Gypsy Moth Status in Connecticut"

The following are to receive 25 year pins at
the next meeting

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New Hampshire Turf Conference January 10-11, 1980

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THURDAY, JANUARY 10
MORNING PROGRAM

MODERATOR: Dr. John Roberts
University of New Hampshire

8:30-10:00 REGISTRATION AND COFFEE

10:00-10:05 WELCOME
Mr. Jack Cronin
President of NHGCSA

10:05-10:10 WELCOME
Dr. Maynard Heckel
Director of Extension - UNH

10:15-10:45 "SOIL AND TURFGRASS MANAGEMENT"
Dr. Vaughn Holyoke
University of Maine

10:45-11:15 "ENVIRONMENTALISTS AND INDUSTRY"
Dr. Tom Fisher
University of New Hampshire

11:15-11:45 TURFGRASS PROBLEMS - 1979
Dr. Joe Troll
University of Massachusetts

11:45- 1:30 LUNCH AND TRADE SHOW

AFTERNOON PROGRAM

1:30-1:55 "PUBLIC RELATIONS IN MANAGEMENT"
Mr. Doug Diecy

1:55-2:20 SOD PRODUCTION - REVIEW AND UPDATE
Mr. John McPhail
Gold Star Sod Farm

2:20-2:45 TURFGRASS INSECT PROBLEMS
Dr. Stan Swier
University of New Hampshire

2:45-3:00 BREAK

3:00-3:30 GOLF COURSE ARCHITECTURE - HISTORY
Mr. Jeff Cornish

3:30-4:00 LANDSCAPING DESIGN
Dr. Owen Rogers
University of New Hampshire

4:00-6:00 TRADE SHOW AND COCKTAIL HOUR

FRIDAY, JANUARY 11

SPLIT SESSION
MODERATOR: Dr. George Estes
9:00-9:05 University of New Hampshire

Session A Golf Course

9:05-9:30 "PLANNING YOUR ESTATE"
Mr. James Barker

9:30-10:00 "SAFETY and EQUIPMENT"
Mr. William Barrett
Clapper Equipment Co.

10:00-10:30 "THE ENERGY CRISIS"
Dr. Francis Gilman
University of New Hampshire

10:30-11:00 "YOU AND THE NATIONAL"
Mr. John Lucus, Jr.
U.S.G.A.

Session B ATHLETIC-PARK-LANDSCAPING

9:00- 9:05 MODERATOR: Bill Cross
Exeter Academy

9:05- 9:30 ATHLETIC FIELD MANAGEMENT - The ABC's
Dr. John Roberts
University of New Hampshire

9:30-10:00 DRAINAGE OF ATHLETIC FIELDS
Mr. David Clemons

10:00-10:30 WHAT SOIL TESTING CAN DO FOR YOU
Mr. Bruce Davies
University of New Hampshire

10:30-11:00 TREE MAINTENANCE
Mr. Wes McKeague

11:00-11:30 PANEL DISCUSSION
MODERATOR: Dick Blake
Woodstock Golf and Tennis Assoc.

11:30- 1:15 LUNCH

Job Openings

Blue Hills C.C. 27 holes
Contact Earl Burtman
364-1200 Bus.
444-5998 Home

Longmeadow C.C. Lowell 9 Holes
Contact John Harrington
c-o Longeadow C.C.
Lowell, Mass. 256-0124

Glocester C.C. R.I. 9 holes
Contact Thomas Whelan
Lakeside Drive
Johnston, R.I. 02919

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