

RAISING teams of 11 or 15 players is not as easy as it once was, most club secretaries will readily admit. But while interest in team games is declining, many sports played by individuals are enjoying as big a boom as they ever have had. And golf is among them. Not even in the halcyon days around the turn of the century, when many of today's existing golf courses were laid down, was the game as popular as now.

which in the case of the smaller clubs at least make up the bulk, and certainly the most regular source, of income. Subscriptions vary from about 5 guineas a year at the smaller courses to 25-40 guineas at the bigger and more exclusive clubs. The cost of golfing is lowest in Scotland where courses are less expensive to run, and more municipal courses operate.

In the past, fees have been kept within

PRESSURES on the GREEN

As a result, many clubs and courses, especially in the London area, have become exceedingly busy. At a public course, like the one in Richmond Park, players might have to arrive at 6-0 a.m. to be sure of a game on a fine week-end. Most recruits find it worthwhile to join a club, however. Britain's one million players support 1,500 clubs, and a number more are planned in the London area, in spite of the high costs of land and construction.

Rising Costs

The surge of popularity has not automatically brought prosperity to the private clubs, which make up the bulk of the total. Like many other institutions, they are constantly under pressure from rising costs of wages, rates, fuel and other overheads. Labour charges generally make up about 60 per cent of the total outgoings, and even this percentage may conceal a shortage of staff. A big club with an 18- and a 9- hole course to maintain will often have an outdoor staff of a dozen or so, and a professional, who also runs the shop and as often as not hires out trolleys in place of the pre-war caddies. The indoor staff may also number up to a dozen, including stewards, waitresses, cooks and kitchen hands, commanded by a secretary, who is usually a retired bank manager or service officer. The wage bill for a staff of this size can easily be £12,000-£15,000 a year.

As a result of increases in costs, which amount to about 20 per cent. in the past five years alone, nearly all clubs have been forced to raise their subscriptions,

reason by working on very small margins, or by increasing the number of members. But many clubs are approaching their optimum numbers (between 250 and 750 are the normal limits) and it seems likely that subscriptions rather than membership totals will have to be increased in the future. This is particularly the case in the London area, where many clubs have waiting lists, and some have re-imposed entrance fees in addition to a high and rising level of subscriptions.

One important alternative source of income, and an increasingly popular one, is to encourage visitors, either individuals or groups, especially at off-peak times. The bigger clubs recoup some of their added costs by staging tournaments, and even the smaller local courses stage championships for company sports clubs and golf societies.

In order to encourage the habit of visiting other courses, the Golf Society of Great Britain offers its members privileges at 15 national courses beyond a given distance from their homes. Golf courses near the sea, such as Ferndown, close to Bournemouth, and some of the well-known resort-courses such as the British Railways courses at Gleneagles, depend a lot on golfing holidays, and green fees there may be the largest single source of income.

Bar Profits

For all clubs, however, the clubhouse offers the best way of making an honest penny. Bar profits have long been the main standby, and recently one-armed

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HON. SECRETARY'S NOTES



I AM VERY PLEASED TO INFORM members that the Welsh Section have expressed a wish to provide the prizes for the Wednesday Competition at Pyle & Kenfig. I am sure everyone will be most happy to accept this kind offer which is a very nice gesture on the part of the home team.

May I remind holders of trophies from last year's Tournament who are not taking part this year, to ensure that these are returned to Pyle and Kenfig Golf Club, Porthcawl, prior to this year's Meeting.

Annual Draw

Will members please note that all counterfoils and monies should be returned to their own Section Secretary and NOT to me.

C. H. Dix.

MISCELLANEOUS

PROFESSIONALS AND GREENKEEPERS having stocks of used golf balls contact Sparkbrook Golf Ball Co., 295 Highgate Road, Stoney Lane, Birmingham, with a view to filling export orders.

PRESSURES ON THE GREEN—cont.

bandits have made a useful haul in some clubs. But the most neglected opportunity has been in catering. Frequently at present turnover is too small to make the service particularly attractive, either to members, cooks or stewards. As a result standards are often low and reliable staff is short in supply. In some cases, the natural conservatism of members is to blame; the idea of attracting visitors and family parties by the clubhouse facilities is not favoured.

In spite of this, the future prospects seem to be best for clubs far-sighted enough to call in professional catering, install a manager, run the clubhouse on strictly business lines, and even go so far as to provide alternative facilities—tennis or squash courts (as at Wentworth), ultimately a swimming pool. This would enable subscriptions to be kept to a minimum, solve the problem of keeping the family amused and maintain golf's main attraction—a wide appeal to different age groups, and to women as well as men.

With grateful acknowledgments to "The Financial Times".

SITUATIONS VACANT

ASSISTANT GREENKEEPER required. (Second of four). Good cottage available in village adjoining the course. Apply with references to Secretary, John O'Gaunt Golf Club, Sandy, Beds.

HEAD GREENKEEPER wanted, Manchester area. Ability to organise staff, pay up to £17 per week. Only experienced greenkeepers need apply. Write Box No. 762, British Golf Greenkeeper.

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