WHY NOT CONSOLIDATE?

Clubs too far from public transportation urged to unite with better-located layouts, to assure survival of both through war

By HERB GRAFFIS

ALTHOUGH the chronically optimistic and the intensely wishful are inclined to hope the gasoline and rubber situation will ease by late spring, in time to solve the problem of existence for golf clubs distant from public transportation, they might as well be told now there ain’t no Santa Claus.

The winter book gives the clubs that are far off the public transportation routes not much better than a one in 30 chance of getting a supporting amount of play for the duration.

So... what to do?

The course may have a chance of getting by if it is converted to some other use during the war. Larger resorts, in numerous instances, already have been taken over for war purposes and others are scheduled to go. Golf blew one logical chance to convert more of its outlying plants to war convalescent hospital use, with rentals sufficient to handle carrying charges and then some, by not getting behind the idea proposed by Franklin H. Miller, set forth in detail in GOLFDOM.

Only golf plants that were suitable for almost immediate conversion to war use have been selected by the government. Lack of data and golf executive interest prevented the idea being furthered in a way to save money for the government, provide the convalescents with facilities highly favorable to their recovery, and to maintain the plants for restoration to 100% golfing use after the war.

Conversion to agricultural use or to pasturage isn’t the right answer that many think. With serious shortage of farm labor now impelling sales of many farms, it doesn’t make sense to think that addition of golf acreage to available and fitted farmland would be especially wise.

A picture of a herd grazing on the Augusta (Ga.) National golf course, widely used in newspapers, may have caused some to think that golf courses would be in keen and profitable demand as pasture but that idea would be stilled by talking to dairy or beef farmers about their troubles in getting help.

Courses that must be closed during the war, because of transportation difficulties, can be maintained on a basis that will enable quick restoration to use after victory. Minimum standards with almost completely mechanized maintenance can care for those situations. Maintenance is
essential if the course is to be used after
the war. In one growing season, un-
attended, a first class golf course will grow
beyond possibility of restoration except at
considerable expense of money and time.
It is certain that whatever wise de-
cision is to be made regarding the fate
of a club during the war must be made on
the basis of facts assembled and considered
thoroughly, well in advance of the time
when a decision is required. There's a
general tendency to put off and hope for
the best instead of building fences in case
of adverse developments that necessitate a
shutdown.

At this time it appears that consolida-
tion for the duration is going to be the
right answer for many private clubs. The
most conveniently located club, of course,
will have to be the nucleus of the con-
solidation. Right at the start a problem
will arise because of the selfishness of a
few of the best-located club's members who
will not want to share their good fortune
with others, even during war. They won't
want to run the wartime risk of having
their course crowded and may be very re-
luctant to incur the risk of having some
persons not of their social standing as
fellow members, even pro tem. It's a
peculiar attitude to take while kids from
the wrong side of the tracks are dying
for them, but golf like almost everything
else must contend with a small but power-
ful minority of boobs.

Don't Ask a Premium

There also may be an inclination to
make the newcomers pay a premium for
the convenient location of the club. This
will not only retard consummation of the
consolidation but get it started off on an
impossible basis. The real need in the
consolidation is a recognition of a mutu-
ality of interest and the need of conces-
sions by all elements concerned.

Notwithstanding the desire of members
of clubs transferring their play to finance
minimum maintenance of their home
courses, the overall yearly cost of their
golf club memberships probably will be
reduced. With assurance of increased in-
come from members of formerly compet-
ing clubs, the club that is the nucleus of
the consolidation undoubtedly will be put
in better condition to go through the war
supplying valuable community wartime
recreation.

The delicacy of beginning consolidation
conferences is regarded as more of a pro-
lem that it actually is. Businessmen mem-
bers of the club involved know that this is
a time to be practical and fair and not
to take undue advantage of a trading fac-
tor in location, prestige, character of
course, etc. One of the vital requirements
of this war effort is unity and if unity
can't be attained between golf club mem-
berships, somebody has muffed one of the
lessons that must be learned to win the
war.

Consolidation negotiations that have
come to GOLFDOM's attention seem to be
proceeding on a factual basis more solid
than a lot of golf club operations in the past.
Maps showing members' residence
and public transportation routes, analyses
of club financial statements and depart-
mental operations, budgets of probable
expected income and operating costs, and
other data giving the probable picture of
the consolidation have been prepared by
club officials for eventual consideration by
the combined membership.

Expect a Few Troubles

Some inconveniences cannot be escaped
in these consolidations. The main one con-
templated by those considering consolida-
tion for the duration is that of lockers. It
does call for personal readjustments, but
in view of the sacrifices demanded by this
kind of a war it would be a rather weak
and unessential sort of an American who
would complain bitterly about sharing his
locker as a contribution to war effort.

Because of the plans of clubs to main-
tain their courses while out of play, pend-
ing return to operation after the war,
there is not contemplated any switch of
greenkeeper employment. In fact, several
clubs have in mind using quite large areas
on the out-of-play courses for vegetable
production. Such plans are being prepared
by greenkeepers who are scheming to
utilize whatever labor they can get, and
their club's equipment, to the utmost.

What will happen to the pros of the
clubs abandoned for the duration is un-
certain. Members of some clubs have war
jobs for the pros and have given the pros
help in getting winter training for these
jobs instead of being turned loose on short
notice without being qualified for war
work. Others are considering expansion
of pro staffs to give instruction a big
boom, expecting that many of the mem-
bers will not have time for 18-hole rounds
except on Sundays and perhaps an occa-
ional other day in the week but can make
good use of instruction and supervised
practice for exercise and escape and as
part of a feature of whatever twilight
golf those members may be able to get.

Back of the consolidation negotiations
and deals is the conviction that golf is
going to be highly important this year to
the class of men who constitute the private
club membership. The great increase in
employee absenteism has forced attention
to the wartime value of recreation plans
that keep the employee in physical shape
to work and in mental eagerness to keep
at the tasks which frequently are monotonous.

However, the executives and engineering
staffs generally are not considered in the
employees' recreation planning. These
men have had heavy responsibilities and
long hour work for more than a year.
Their intensity, without change of pace, is
beginning to show in the quality and
quantity of their work. Unless they begin
to take care of themselves with the kind
of reconditioning golf can supply, they'll
-crack under the strain.

Some of them already are so lagging in
spirit and strength required for their
own good that it'll be tough enough to
get them to go to some inconvenience to
get the golf they need. Probably, in some
cases, the novelty of the proposed con-
solidations may be a factor in getting
them out to the courses.

Admittedly the consolidation proposition
has many problems to solve, but to the
sort of brains demanded in winning the
war the problems shouldn't be too stiff.
And there is a fair chance that these golf
club consolidations may work out like a
similar situation has worked out in the
medical field. The doctors who aren't in
the service have all the patients they can
handle. That will probably be what hap-
pens to the golf clubs that are left.

So far, no information regarding daily
fee course combinations—to allow sur-
vival of outlying courses—has come to
GOLFDOM's notice. Because these estab-
lishments are privately owned enterprises,
there probably won't be any mutual plan-
ning to preserve the outlying establish-
ments, although there are cases where co-
ordinated working arrangements might be
mutually helpful to course owners and a
considerable service to the public that
counts on golf to keep itself in best con-
dition for the war effort.

USGA Re-Affirms Golf's
All-Out for War

By JACK FULTON

"THE United States Golf Association
at this, its annual meeting, believing
that sportsmanship is implicit in the
name of golf and that there is also im-
PLICIT in sportsmanship those qualities
which best serve our country in both peace
and war, hereby dedicates all it may pos-
sess in influence, in organization and in
facilities to whatever service or sacrifice
may best serve the cause of the United
Nations."

This resolution, adopted by the USGA
at its annual meeting in New York City,
Jan. 9, and conveyed to President Roose-
velt, paints in a few words the course the
USGA will take in the year ahead—and
hence the attitude of golf generally this
coming season.

In more detail, as outlined by re-elected
President George W. Blossom, the USGA
for 1943 will cancel its traditional cham-
pionships, will interest itself only in such
tournaments as are patterned to the war
effort, and will continue to urge its mem-
ber clubs to contribute the greatest pos-
sible service to the nation. This policy
is strictly along the lines laid down at
the 1942 USGA meeting a year ago, when
golf was the first sport to recognize the
need for alignment to the war effort.

Late in 1942, in an endeavor to measure
golf's service during the past year, the
USGA sent questionnaires to the country's
5,200 golf courses; 1,296 organizations
returned the questionnaires. Of these, 698
courses and courses gave complete replies
and from the data supplied (which should
be regarded as indicative of golf's service

February, 1943