



Al B. Anderson

Sporting Goods Market Can Be Economic Barometer

Will the sporting goods market be a good barometer for economists to gauge what's in store for the economy? That was the question asked at the 46th National Sporting Goods Convention and Show In Houston in late January.

According to NSGA president Al B. Anderson, "this industry is one of the the economic strongholds in times of economic hardship." Anderson suggested that the rate of buying for spring and summer merchandise, which is usually vigorous, may be a clue to the future of the nation's overall economy.

Anderson noted that man's greatest joy is his chosen leisure activity and that it seems unlikely that he will sacrifice it to the economy until absolutely necessary. Many industry watchers have maintained that if the small retailer, in this case the golf shop merchandiser, is to survive, they must buy judiciously to weather the economic decline.

California Fertilizer Assn. Supports Turf Research

The soil improvement committee of the California Fertilizer Assn. has presented the Southern California Turfgrass Council with \$1,000 to bolster its trust fund for turfgrass research.

The Council established the fund last year and has contributed \$6,000 to a research program now underway at the South Coast Field Station in Santa Ana, Calif.

Make Tennis A Plus, Says Consultant

Though a very high percentage of clubs have tennis courts, the lack of proper initial planning of these facilities is quite often the cause of member apathy, according to Dennis Van der Meer, top teaching pro and industry consultant.

According to Van der Meer, hundreds of hours are spent on planning golf facilities, but the same doesn't run true for the tennis operations on the same courses. "Either you have to trudge up a dirt road to find a couple of courts on a wind-swept knoll or you mend your way down into a wet gully where shadows and leaves are always on the playing surface," Van der Meer said.

The industry consultant insists that tennis players, much as golfers concern themselves with the course, place a high priority on an immaculate court. Courts that are cracked, dirty, dusty, or are leave-strewn are not inviting to play on and should be renovated and maintained regularly. "Lack of maintenance of courts is one of the prime reasons that tennis does not boom at many golf clubs. Yet the remedy is low-cost and simple," Van der Meer remarked.

Musts for the modern court include wind screens, benches and umbrellas. Nets should be in good repair.

'Pentagon Golf Pricetag Steep': Proxmire

For years, congressmen have accused the Pentagon of playing around with the taxpayers money and Sen. William Proxmire might finally have some proof. The Wisconsin lawmaker has discovered a \$20 million overrun in the Defense Department's budget for the upkeep of golf courses on military installations.

Proxmire announced his findings on Jan. 20, after receiving a report he had requested from the General Accounting Office on the matter. The GAO found the Defense Department had spent \$13.9 million of its appropriated funds for the course operations and an additional \$20 million of non-appropriated funds had been added.

United States military installations with golf facilities number 300 throughout the world, although only 30 are overseas. Ron Tammen, Proxmire's legislative assistant told GOLFDOM that the Senator's investigation was based more on the "improper" use of nonappropriated funds for the maintenance of the courses, instead of a dislike of the game.

"The Senator thinks golf is a great pastime and that recreation facilities on the bases are essential, but he does disagree with such a large cost overrun," Tammen said.

Proxmire has insisted that since the Defense Department continually repeats its cry for more money,

how can it justify such expenditures for recreation. In short, where are the priorities of the Pentagon. Added to this, is the Senator's assertion that if cost overruns occur, the courses should be open to the general public, since the taxpayers are left to make up the deficit.

Figures indicate that over \$113,000 is the standard yearly expenditure per course, which roughly fits into the national average. Indications are that Proxmire will bring the course matter up at the annual Senate hearings on military spending later this summer. In a Senate speech, Proxmire reiterated that the use of federal funds to run military courses was a waste of the taxpayers money in a time of inflation, compounded by recession.

"Construction of an additional 77 courses is now underway including a figure of \$24,000 being spent by the Army out of research and development funds and \$63,000 from the Air Force family housing appropriated funds," the Senator noted. In addition to the existing 300 facilities, the GAO disclosed that the military has 163 driving ranges, 178 practice greens and 19 pitch and putt courses.

Studies have shown that the military has built its own facilities even when comparable public operations were nearby. Asked about the GAO report, a Defense Department spokesman came up with the usual, "no comment."