



## FORECAST FOR '78

GOLF BUSINESS Advisory Board members represent a cross-section of the industry. And like their peers, they've been thinking about what the new year has in store for the golf business as a whole and for them in particular.

Here's how they view the big issues and problems—  
as well as the probable effects.

**Tom J. Rogers, CGCS,  
Superintendent of Golf  
Patty Jewett and Valley Hi Golf Courses  
Park & Recreation Dept.  
City of Colorado Springs, Colo.**

It looks as if shortages, conservation, and governmental regulations will dictate our programs and planning more in 1978 than they did in 1977. Shortages of water, power, gasoline, and equipment that holds together will cause us to experiment until we discover other means which will enable us to conserve our natural resources, our golf courses, and our jobs.

Restricted-use pesticides, pesticide certification, and the EPA will bring about changes in our industry during the coming year that will make the changes that OSHA made seem minute. I hope we're all ready for this one — even the golf professional and manager — because this is going to effect us all.

The good thing that will come from all of this is stronger organizations and better relations among the manager, superintendent, and golf professional, because we are all in the service business, working toward one goal: better facilities.

Golf in Colorado should be super next year, especially with the USGA "Open" being played at Cherry Hills CC in Denver, and many new courses opening in the resort areas of the Rocky Moun-

tains — bring many golfing families to visit our state.

In Colorado Springs, the municipal courses (Patty Jewett and Valley Hi) will continue to increase rounds, revenues, services, and improvements.

**Bob Benning, Golf Professional  
Congressional Country Club  
Bethesda, Md.**

The new minimum wage of \$2.65 an hour will certainly affect any golf professional's payroll. Eventually it is passed on to the member or customer in higher prices or higher club storage rates. Hopefully, there won't be too much lag before these increases are passed on, because there will be an obvious drop in profits during the interval. As businessmen, though, we must realize that the minimum wage has increased from \$2.00 to \$2.30, and now it's going to \$2.65 — that's a 25 percent increase we've been faced with in 4 or 5 years.

On the brighter side, I'm encouraged by the reversal by the Appellate Court of the New Orleans Golf City case. It probably won't make any difference immediately against the big stores' loss-leader tactics and the resulting discounts that golf professionals are forced into, but it is nice to know that some courts support

**“We have to offer something a little extra. It's not the best course, the best equipment, or the best clothing — it is the best service.”**

SOME of the concepts of price structure maintenance.

I think the stock market has an effect on our business. When the market's up, business is good all over, and people have more money to spend on luxuries such as golf. And when it's down, vice versa. Right now, the market's down, and it can't go too much further down next year — or can it? As for Congressional CC, we look for increased activity, with the opening of our new, fourth 9 holes scheduled for early next June.

**Philip Jackson, Golf Director  
Los Angeles County  
Parks, Recreation Department  
Los Angeles, Calif.**

I think that some of the important issues facing the golf business in 1978, and municipal golf in particular, include budget restrictions, inflation, and energy conservation. However, the most important issue facing the Los Angeles County golf system in 1978 is increasing the number of rounds of golf played on county courses to make more efficient use of these public facilities during the slack periods on weekday afternoons.

With an increase in the construction of municipal and daily fee courses, gone are the days when golfers sleep in their cars in the parking lot to make reservations to be the first on the tee at Los Angeles County courses. We experienced a slight drop in play in 1976, due partially to an increase in green fees during October of the same year, and there has been no significant increase in 1977.

Being a municipal agency, we are bound by certain restrictions that preclude full participation in golf promotional activities, whereas daily fee golf courses may become involved in promotional activities. Currently, we are requesting that some of the restrictions be removed.

In spite of the problems facing the golf industry, I think 1978 will be a better year as a whole for the golf business and for our golf system as well. With increased technology in turf maintenance, new innovations in management of golfing facilities, new golf clubs being organized, new golf courses being built, and new clubs being made aware of the USGA and its role in golf, I think the golf business in 1978 will show a considerable improvement.

**David C. Harmon,  
Director of Golf Course Maintenance  
Golden Horseshoe & Spotswood Golf Courses  
Williamsburg, Va.**

As I now see it, the most important single problem facing the golf course superintendent in the year to come will be the ever-rising inflation which is driving the golf course budget sky-high. The word is out that golf course maintenance budgets must be cut, or at least held to the 1977 level. With the prospect of an 8 percent increase in many supplies, parts, and labor, professional turf management decisions will be a must. Many of the frills we have grown accustomed to will have to be shelved. New equipment capable of reducing labor costs will have to be considered. Better trained golf course employees paid a respectable wage will be required for survival.

It will therefore be the responsibility of the superintendent to take six or seven men instead of ten or twelve and still come up with the desired maintenance standard required. Taking time during the winter months to personally train your employees in basic turfgrass management procedures will be required. Operating a golf course maintenance program today is no easy task with OSHA, EPA, and other governmental agencies breathing down one's back, as well as the greens chairman. Only the experienced turf managers will be able to cope with the never ending problems.

I believe 1978 will be an outstanding year for the golf business. With inflation on a constant rise, families will stay closer to home rather than take long expensive vacations. People will spend more time playing tennis, fishing, boating, and, of course, playing golf. Golf courses from public to private should see a sharp increase in play next year. The only factor that could reduce the rounds of golf played would be the local weather pattern.

**Chuck Brasington,  
Golf Professional  
Gainesville Golf & Country Club  
Gainesville, Fla.**

Most customers seem to be getting more price conscious. Professionals must take advantage of quantity purchase discounts and will probably have to have more special promotion-type sales.

I do not believe that 1978 will be significantly different from 1977, but I do feel that we will have to work harder to get our share of the golf business.

**Robert M. Williams,  
Golf Course Superintendent  
Bob O'Link Golf Club  
Highland Park, Ill.**

Golf businessmen must make an effort toward holding the line on maintenance expenses in order to offset inflationary trends. While golf course maintenance costs comprise 10 to 20 percent of the golfers' expense dollar, other departmental areas must be given due financial consideration to ensure the well-being of the entire golf operation.

There is a growing concern with water availability, cost, and management. In some West Coast areas, the cost of water has doubled, tripled, and quadrupled in the past year to a staggering annual cost of as much as \$70,000.

The outlook for '78 should be better if the overall economy holds steady. Our fiscal year (October 1, 1976 through September 30, 1977) was affected by abnormal weather conditions causing reduced play and a reduction in guest fees. October and November were unseasonably cold, and August and September were exceptionally wet. The average precipitation for this 2-month period is 6.2 inches, while this year we had over 20 inches of rainfall in August and September. Usually the weather situation will balance out over our 7-month playing season, but this year was an exception. Hopefully, 1978 will bring our weather pattern back to a more normal mode in the Chicagoland area.

**Roger Maxwell,  
Director of Golf  
Marriott's Camelback Country Club  
Scottsdale, Ariz.**

Service is the name of the game. I am at a resort operation that handles approximately 50,000 rounds of golf a year. Each and every round of golf is very important to us. We must make each person feel as comfortable as possible. From our first contact over the telephone to our last effort of putting our guest's travel bag over his equipment, we must offer our best possible service. As the resort golf operation becomes more competitive, we have to offer something a little extra. This something extra is intangible. It is not the best golf course; it is not the best equipment; it is not the best clothing — but it is the best service.

1978 will be our industry's best year ever. The golf business offers more golf courses and country clubs, better products and



**“I truly believe 1978 will be a good year because golf professionals are going to band together and buy better. The pro should be the hub of the golf business.”**

more industry-wide advertising. All of this, coupled with the noticeable decline in the tennis boom, means more interest in playing golf. At Camelback Country Club we are constantly improving our product: better accommodations, service, equipment, clothing, and golf course. Because of this effort, we expect to increase our number of rounds of golf in 1978. We realize that a larger number of rounds will increase our total shop sales, gross profit, and most important our net profit.

**Frank E. Morey, Golf Professional  
The Wilshire Country Club  
Los Angeles, Calif.**

Golf professionals at golf clubs and courses are going to have to improve their buying power with the help of the manufacturers. The discount stores have ruined the hard goods sales for the club professional. Through their quantity buying, they purchase the same products at great savings which have been denied the pros in the past by manufacturers.

The club professional needs some help from the manufacturer. Increasing club inventory with deferred payments, or consignment arrangement in some manner would help. The manufacturer who wishes to keep his product in the golf shop is going to have to work something out. If the manufacturer does not need the sales from the club professional, we will find it out this year.

I truly believe 1978 will be a good year because golf professionals are going to band together and buy better. The buying co-op idea is getting stronger, and it will keep improving. And some of the manufacturers, I hope, will come to the aid of the golf professional through better buying. The pro should be the hub of the golf business, being situated where every golfer has to pass by. He has to step forward and get the people back through his shop.

**Peter F. Miller, Superintendent  
Firestone Country Club  
Akron, Ohio**

1978 will have to be an important year for cost-savings techniques throughout the industry. All except the very exclusive clubs will be asked to provide the same services as 1977, but at the same cost level in 1978. This might be difficult to do in face of a minimum wage increase or mandated labor increases, but through use of equipment and more labor efficiency, overall costs should be able to be held.

Golf business, although maybe less in numbers, will yield a greater return — generally because of increased income derived from increased charges for greens fees, golf cars, golf equipment. It will cost the customer more to play the game.

**W. R. Steger, General Manager  
River Oaks Country Club  
Houston, Tex.**

The biggest issue in 1978 will be clubs trying to meet the inflationary cost of operating. All clubs are facing this, just as the members do in their businesses. We will see this year become one where many clubs will look closer at their membership restrictions. They will take in more members as they realize the golf course isn't really that crowded. Increase in dues will be the answer, along with better management.

1978 will be a difficult year. I expect golf to grow, but to cost much more. Members of private clubs and municipal players will have to pay more to play. I think they do this with some resistance. Management must give them more service for their dollar — a better product.

**Steve Horrell, Manager  
Singing Hills Country Club  
El Cajon, Calif.**

Water availability will be our biggest problem in 1978. Should California face another year of drought, golf course irrigation would be one of the first things to be curtailed. Water costs are already high and could become higher.

But 1978 will be a better year. Played to near capacity in 1977 — same anticipated for 1978 with an increase in fees from \$5 weekdays and \$8 weekends to \$6 and \$9.

**Laurice T. Hall, CCM,  
Director & General Manager  
Pinehurst Country Club  
Littleton, Colo.**

Costs of country club operations will continue their upward spiral and will challenge management to increase efficiency. Notwithstanding such efforts, we will see a need to increase dues and a likely increase in initiation fees as well at private clubs throughout the country. Members and prospective applicants will continue their desires for recreational pursuits in private clubs, but the club that fails to upgrade programs, activities, and facilities may find itself falling by the wayside as newer, more modern facilities are developed nearby to attract the younger members. A vibrant, active, thriving club for the whole family will be one answer. A need to promote food and beverage facilities will exist as members will tend toward some conservation and use athletic facilities more for value.

Without question, we will continue to see an increase in golf and tennis activities by all citizens and, of course, members and guests at private country clubs. Tennis will increase to a greater degree than golf and will assist a better balance of percentage of club members playing these sports.

The past 4 years at Pinehurst have continued to increase over the previous year's gross receipts from members. This includes food and beverage as well, and by December 1977, our food and beverage will reach \$1,100,000 — up from \$50,000 in 1976.

**Richard H. Eichner, Superintendent  
Lakeside Golf Club of Hollywood  
North Hollywood, Calif.**

At this writing, the paramount issue, at least in the West, remains water conservation. We have yet to receive significant rainfall in Southern California and are still operating under the restrictions imposed by emergency water conservation ordinances. If further restrictions are imposed, I see little choice but to reduce the amount of irrigated area of the courses affected; that is, to cease irrigation of roughs and perimeter areas and perhaps even limit fairway irrigation to landing areas and approaches. The impact on the game and the golfer produced by these management changes, should they indeed become necessary, is not a pleasant thing to anticipate. The cost of restoring these areas to normal appearance and condition once the drought is over would be an additional consideration of budgetary significance at most course.

One fact of the drought which will remain with us from now on is the increased unit cost of irrigation water. This reflects rate changes approved on the basis of appeals by utilities that lower sales volumes (a product of the conservation effort) must be offset by higher rates to maintain profitability. It is unlikely that price rollbacks will ever occur, so the investment in efficient and sophisticated irrigation systems becomes ever more justifiable.

What kind of year will 1978 be for us? With more rainfall, better. With less, worse.