

# GOLF IS BIG BUSINESS

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**Ron Wills takes  
a look at the  
background to  
Britain's fastest  
growing outdoor  
recreation**

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appeared in 'Golf News'  
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to reprint it here.  
Golf News would always  
be glad to have news  
items from our readers*

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**G**OLF, if you'll excuse the cliché, is booming. Weekly, almost daily, more and more of you unsuspecting humans, attracted by its apparent simplicity, are completely captivated by the sport.

Before you can say "eyes down," you're completely under its spell . . . hooked . . . an addict.

Suddenly, that infuriating little white ball has taken on a most sinister air. Sneeringly, it mocks you in your puny endeavours to hit it hard and fiercely.

You become a helpless, blubbing mass as it shoots off at a 45-degree tangent. You curse. You swear in a vividly articulate manner.

But you're still playing, aren't you . . . ?

And seeing there are so many more masochists like you around, I was curious—being that sort of person—about the financial side of the boom.

Then my Editor came across, and read avidly, an article on the business side of golf. I knew that my curiosity was on the brink of being satisfied. By way of a good deal of hard work, of course!

The article appeared in the *Three Banks Review*, which is published by three Scottish banks (The Royal Bank of Scotland, Glyn Mills and Co. and William Deacon's Bank Limited).

There was a warning glint in my Editor's eye as he finished reading. He thrust the Review at me "Read that!" he said, with customary economy of words, "and then dig out a lot more facts and do a piece for the paper."

Well, the first part was simple enough. I read the article . . . and was more surprised by some of the facts it imparted.

For a start, did you know that golf is now a £20 million-a-year industry? Or that the annual turn-over in golf equipment approaches £10 million?

The article went on :

"All present indications are that the amount will continue to rise; overall spending on golf has trebled in the last ten years, and the game's part in the social life of the country is growing apace.

"A steadily increasing number of young people are being introduced to the game by the Golf Foundation, whose instructional courses now cover more than 650 schools. Old and false prejudices about golf being unsuitable for the young have been overcome; its qualities as a test of character, of self-control and good manners, and its benefits as a pastime, a relaxation, a challenge and an exercise, that can last a lifetime, are now widely recognised.

"Furthermore, the spread of wealth since the war has brought golf within the compass of thousands to whom previously it was only a name. Membership of a club, as of a country club in the United States, is a status symbol, and has become almost as desirable to the parvenues as possession of a Jaguar."

The golf boom established, I went in search of more facts, more revealing figures.

Which explains how I came to spend the best part of thirty minutes one hot afternoon trudging up and down Oxford Street. I was looking for number 145.

However, the shops and offices there seem strangely reluctant to reveal their numbers. And my sympathies went out to a novice postman.

Number 145 is the headquarters of the Federation of British Manufacturers of Sports and Games Ltd. Though you'd never guess it from the outside. There's no nameplate announcing their presence. And you reach the office by clambering up three narrow flights of stairs.

On the first floor I was told: "I think they're upstairs."

On the second floor, my query was greeted with: "I think they're upstairs."

On the third floor, they were quite sure that it was indeed the headquarters of the Federation of British Manufacturers of Sports and Games Ltd.

And once there, the pace fairly buzzed with efficiency. The Federation's secretary, Mr. A. H. Spink—known in the trade as "Sandy"—had all the facts and figures neatly tabulated, easily understandable and he backed them with logical, feasible explanations.

He translated the golf boom first into cold, hard facts which told a remarkable story.

In five years, the sales of golf balls rocketed from 406,000 dozens (1957) to 530,000 dozens in 1961.

During the same period, the sale of golf clubs leapt from 308,000 to 437,000. Last year the figure reached 464,000.

In 1959, the value of imported golf clubs was negligible. In 1960, imports were worth £64,000—paid mostly for American clubs.

In the next twelve months, the Australians, the Canadians and even the Japanese jumped on the band-wagon and pumped golf clubs into Britain as fast as they could manufacture them.

### Going Right Up

They—and the Americans—sent the figure hurtling up to £153,000 in 1961. And last year it was an incredible £215,000.

"Of course," said Mr. Spink, "to that figure you have to add import duty and purchase tax and, with the retail margin of profit at fifty per cent. I reckon £450,000 worth of foreign clubs were sold in this country last year."

And without doubt, all these figures will climb even higher in 1963.

The Americans quick, as always, to exploit a new market, recently opened a factory on the West coast of Scotland to manufacture golf clubs in this country—thus, presumably, saving on transportation costs. This type of activity is likely to grow as the boom gathers speed.

Only the fact that the Royal and Ancient has vetoed the use of the larger American ball has prevented the Americans building a factory for their manufacture, too.

The Federation's figures for balls incidentally, refer to the four principal

manufacturers — Dunlop, Spalding, Slazengers and Penfold. These four account for between 90 and 95 per cent of all sales.

Clubs, of course, are in a different category. Many smaller companies — particularly in Scotland—still manufacture them by hand. Their business is steady, if small, compared to the larger companies. As a result the influx of foreign clubs does not endanger their livelihood.

Unlike the Federation, individual companies—such as Dunlops—are loathe to reveal figures of any description. Even a percentage increase, or decrease, of sales is not something they care to pass on to the Press, the world at large, or their competitors in general. In fact, they are jealously guarded.

As one representative put it: "We don't want to let our rivals know what sort of business we're doing, do we?"

But one thing is certain. Any firm or company connected with the manufacture of golfing equipment is not going short of a crust.

## AND THIS IS HOW THE MONEY GOES

### Sales of golf balls

1957 .....	406,000 dozens
1958 .....	417,000
1959 .....	481,000
1960 .....	500,000
1961 .....	530,000
1962 .....	507,000

### Sales of golf clubs

1957 .....	308,000
1958 .....	314,000
1959 .....	339,000
1960 .....	367,000
1961 .....	437,000
1962 .....	464,000

### Imported clubs

1959 .....	Negligible
1960 .....	£64,000
1961 .....	£153,000
1962 .....	£215,000

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## Subscriptions are overdue

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Did you help your  
Section Secretary  
and Treasurer  
by paying up  
promptly?

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*An opportunity for greenkeepers to give their views before a new product is marketed. Send your opinions to the Editor now and he will pass them on.*

The Editor,  
The British Golf Greenkeeper.  
Dear Sir,

We have been asked to produce a product combining the soil-conditioning properties of Alginure with the NPK value required for top quality turf.

Whilst this is possible from a technical point of view, we should be most grateful if you could advise us—possibly through your readers?—if the price of such a product, which it is estimated would be approximately 125/- cwt., would be acceptable to those people who are interested in creating and maintaining high-quality turf.

We thank you in anticipation of your valued opinion and advice.

Yours faithfully,  
OXFORD HORTICULTURAL  
LABORATORIES, LTD.