

# NO REASON FOR GOLF BEING sport page step-child

## —FIGURES SHOW IT SPORT GIANT

By HERB GRAFFIS

SOME of the newspaper experts are awakening to the fact that the sport page interest is shifting to golf. The awakening hasn't advanced much farther than the stage of a few stretches and yawns, but it's hopeful so far as it concerns those who look in vain to most newspapers for the desired quantity and quality of golf news.

W. P. Beazell, assistant managing editor of the *New York World*, speaking before the convention of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, stated such an event as the recent Sharkey-Stribling "fight" was not a matter of sporting interest. Despite the promoters of the fight paying newspaper correspondents' traveling expenses, board bills and entertainment, the newspapers were suckers to devote space to such ballyhoo, so the Beazell address pointed out.

W. O. McGeehan, widely known and authoritative sports writer, recently commented:

"The (baseball) stories coming up from the south prepare the customers for the season's regular opening. Without this sort of ballyhoo there would be no particular rush to the turnstiles on the opening day. Even the national pastime needs a long and sustained ballyhoo.

"I recall that during a strike which forced the New York newspapers to suspend publication for a day there was a crucial series at the Yankee stadium. Babe Ruth was in a rush to break his own record for home runs. Now the customers of the Yankees knew of the crucial series, but I understand that the attendance fell off to about 50 per cent of what the Yankees expected.

"This was because the ballyhoo slacked for twenty-four hours. The box office needed the stimulus that is given through the account of the game of the day before."

### What Is Advertising?

Sports editors have cited the fact that off-season golf copy is flavored with boomers' advertising so strongly that it calls for appearance at the advertising line rate. Maybe so. What if the realtors of the West coast and the Southland have

put up opulent tournament purses for the publicity they hope they will get? Is this any more reprehensible than the baseball clubs paying the traveling expenses of the reporters assigned to cover the training trip and the season's schedule of the so-called home town team, which is privately owned and made up of non-residents? And when you get right down to the cash register appraisal of the business department of the newspapers, who spends the most money with the newspapers in advertising, the baseball interests or the manufacturers of golf equipment and the daily fee golf courses? The golf people, of course!

### Golf Out-draws Baseball

No exact figures are available on annual attendance at the baseball parks of the American and National leagues, this information being withheld as a matter of private business. However, estimates of expert baseball statisticians placed the 1927 big league attendance at 11,000,000, with the 1928 figure slightly lower.

Now let's compare that figure with the number of rounds of golf played by the people who are in the "trade territory" of the 16 major league clubs. In the territory of the 11 cities comprising the American and National league circuits there were 703 golf clubs operating during the 1928 season. Of these, 95 are daily fee and public courses. Figuring the daily fee and public course play average figure at one-quarter of the figures at Jackson Park (Chicago district), and the private course average membership at 300, with 50% of the members playing only five games a year, we still have a total of 12,000,000 rounds of golf played each season. We're being conservative with these figures. The actual total, we are confident, would run higher.

Then, for some further enlightenment on what is the national game, turn to the sporting goods manufacturers. Evidence from them is plain that the rate of increase in the sale of golf goods during the

last several years has been decidedly ahead of the baseball sales figure.

The real estate and property investment of the golf field, according to GOLFDOM'S 1928 survey, is in excess of \$750,000,000. Can the other sports show such a substantial rating? Even with the expensive college football plants and the big baseball establishments of the larger cities, we doubt that the invested capital and operating costs of all other sports combined shades the figure set by the 5,300 golf clubs in the United States.

### Golf Reporting Difficult

Golf is a hard sport for the newspapers to cover. The reporter cannot sit down and watch the action take place in front of him. No longer are we in the days when a golf story written from the score board was satisfactory. The golfers want the technicalities in a story now. Action is spread out, and there is no subsidy scheme of meeting the cost of getting the story. But, on the other hand, there is a keener, more extensive and natural reader interest, so what's the sports editor to do? The golf writers who are on the job have the toughest spot on the sports staff, and this is something to be borne in mind by the golf club officials, managers and professionals.

### More Propaganda Needed?

Probably more live copy in the form of press releases coming from the U. S. G. A. or the various sectional or local golf associations would help. It may be that the manufacturers are overlooking a good bet in this direction, as the propaganda work of other sport interests indicate. We're not so sure that the U. S. G. A. should dip more strongly into this, as the activities of the U. S. Lawn Tennis association in this direction show what a mess it is possible to make of this hopefully ambitious effort. It seems to us that it is a matter for local educational effort by club officials and by the manufacturers.

### The Readers Who "Count"

The newspapers, in their advertising solicitation, always emphasize the buying power of their readers. What is more accurate evidence of buying power than a country club membership? But volume also means something, and with only about 5% of the population paying income tax on more than \$5,000 a year, golf's 3,000,000 players mean the bulk of

the buying power. You can safely say these days that the spenders in every locality are golfers. At all places in the American social scale golf is the headliner of sport in the United States today. It is the one and only popular American sport that is not enjoyed by its players vicariously. Golfers must be active!

This rise to a commanding position has been attained in the last 10 to 15 years. Even in the colleges it has won its popularity sans press agent and practically without institutional support, as was noted by Major Griffith, commissioner of Big Ten athletics, recently.

This season should see the spread of enlightenment among the publishers and sports editors of newspapers relative to the amount of space to which golf is entitled. The old order has passed on the sport page, and golf plainly is king. Whatever work can be done by club officials and professionals is called for now, and we suggest some concerted effort or the field will continue to get only casual attention, and that grudgingly and to no avail, just as it received in the tax deal from the government.

Every chance you get with your local newspaper men, discuss this situation with them. It will do your own club, the sport and the newspaper sport pages and advertising columns good when the matter of golf publicity is properly handled.

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A NEW hunch in the golf real estate business is being worked out by a Chicago company. This organization contemplates putting up a big co-operative apartment building in a suburban location, convenient to transportation, and building and operating a golf course adjoining, exclusively for the use of the apartment owners. A number of enterprises having homesites in connection with golf course membership are going today, but this, so far as is known, is the first plan involving apartment house construction.

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VAN HILL, caddie-master at Shaker Heights (Cleveland district), each day appoints one of the kids "officer of the day." This boy is responsible for seeing that the caddies who are off duty keep the caddie "bull-pen" and territory adjacent to the clubhouse policed up and as neat as the proverbial pin. The stunt goes over great with the caddies.