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# Golfdom

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## ESTABLISHED CLUBS BOLDLY Cut Membership Cost TO GET LIVE WAITING LISTS

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**M**ERELY a quick gaze at the national income tax statistics gives plenty of foundation for the opinion that when a lot of golf clubs in any particular district get their initiation fees up so they range from \$1,000 to \$1,700 there is not going to be a wild race to get into the waiting list. When you get the admission price over a "grand," as \$1,000 is called in Chicagoese, and add the transfer fee and the tax you have a total that scares off a lot of the young fellows who are highly desirable members. They are potentially lively boosters of the club, who keep the propaganda for new members circulating about in the right places, and they will come to the club often and spend merrily. Maybe because they are such good spenders is one reason why they haven't around \$1,500 to plank down in one lump for club admission.

You have to get spenders around a golf club, and many of them, if the club is going to escape a sad operating deficit at the end of the year. Take the situation at the representative first class golf club in the Chicago district that occupies a plant ten to twelve years old. Right now most of them are trying to work their ways out of financial situations that had their birth about a decade ago when golf was not going strongest and was cuddled in a comforting delusion of grandeur. They all believed in Santa Claus and put in plants that today call for interest charges representing a half or more of the annual deficit of many clubs. The Chicago status

is not unique. Many of the other metropolitan district clubs that are about a dozen years old are trying to get their bearings in the financial hangover that was due after the gay spending spree marking the beginning of golf's most rapid period of growth.

The average good metropolitan district golf club that is about ten years old, or maybe a little more, can set itself for a membership turn-over of around 10 per cent a year. With this turn-over, due to members leaving the city, competition of other clubs, etc., and the dying down of the burning enthusiasm and novelty that filled up the first part of the roster the club can set itself for a session of hard sledding over ashes. Prospective members don't clamor around the club door seeking admission.

### Take Drastic Action

As sluggish as memberships were going and as slow as house business was, one of the well known clubs in the Chicago district decided to take drastic action by cutting the membership price. It wouldn't be just the nice thing now to mention names for the step was a heroic one and there might be some who would interpret it unfavorably. These critics would be 100% wrong in the light of actual experience for the club's members are highly pleased, the club has a waiting list, and there was no operating deficit this year for the first time since the club moved into its new plant. Of course one could

mention that, for reasons best known to its directors and members, Old Elm, the most exclusive club in the Chicago district, reduced its admission price from \$4,000 to \$3,500 this year. But all of its members are so rich they can afford to wear their old clothes if they want to, and those enviable people are the law unto themselves. The last thing that Old Elm ever would be concerned with is a waiting list.

The club that started the initiation fee reduction movement in the Chicago district formerly had an initiation fee of \$1,250, plus \$250 transfer fee and tax, bringing the total to \$1,650. Now the initiation fee has been cut to \$1,000. With the transfer fee and tax added the total is now \$1,350. That may not seem like enough of a reduction to count but it almost immediately sold out the unfilled memberships and left the club at the end of the active season with a waiting list.

### Get A Live Asset

The reduction in price completely whipped the problem of the non-supporting member. There were enough applicants to allow the club to pick those who would patronize the establishment in all departments and who were active spenders. About half of the membership had paid the top price for memberships but there was no articulate complaint forthcoming when the membership cost was reduced. They much preferred a live, quick asset to the frozen asset that is represented by membership in a club without a waiting list.

One of the interesting developments of the livelier and complete membership was the reduction in the menu prices. The club now is serving a fine table d'hote dinner for \$1, and, as above mentioned, operated the house at a profit for the first time in the club's history. The income is such that the club is spending \$100,000 on a course improvement campaign featuring a fairway watering system, this expenditure being financed by an additional mortgage amply cared for by the increased revenue.

Word spread around the Chicago district concerning the success of this reduction and at least five other clubs have taken similar action, with the prospect of further activity in this direction at a number of annual meetings this fall. One club that reduced from \$1,000 to \$780 is one of the district's newer enterprises and has experienced the usual troubles after the first flush of enthusiasm ended. About

two dozen members who got in at the top price were effected by this reduction but no rebates were made, with the exception of those to two members who joined one week prior to the reduction. This particular club was having hell's own time with members who were delinquent on house accounts. The reduction in price and the consequent influx of new members made it possible for the club to get hard-boiled with the slow-pay boys. They paid up, for there were plenty ready to take their memberships when they were forfeited in strict accordance with the rules of the club. In this case everything was tried to stir up membership applications so the club would have its roster filled with fellows who were good revenue members. They tried the plan of having each three of the present members responsible for getting one new member or being assessed the price of a new member, but it didn't work.

One evil that has been eliminated by the reduction in the price of memberships is that of advertising memberships in the newspapers. Without identifying the club in the advertisements the member who is anxious to sell digs up an applicant. He arranges with the applicant to present him to the membership committee and if acceptable to that committee, to secretly rebate on the price at which memberships must clear through the club.

There may be some flaws in the plan but to date none has come to the attention of the clubs that have taken the step as their idea of a logical readjustment of the golf club membership price structure.

### Illinois Pro Vets Organize

Following the successful start made by the senior professional organization in the New York metropolitan district, the Illinois district has established one of these groups

Jack Patterson is president of the Pro Seniors' Golf association formed October 21 at Chicago. Jim Wilson is vice president, Jack Daray, secretary and Harry Hampton, treasurer. Dave MacIntosh is chairman of committee on rules and regulations. Other members of this committee are Jim Wilson, Joe Roseman and Dave Foulis. Among the charter members of the old settlers' society in Illinois are Al Naylor, George Knox, Phil Gaudin, John Reuter, Bill Bell, Willie Hunter, Harry Collis and Alex Pirie.