



Here is where America's rubber magnates have their golf headquarters; it's the Portage C. C. clubhouse at Akron (O.)

KEY TO PROFITABLE OPERATION IS Social Memberships REVEALS INVESTIGATION OF JACK FULTON, Jr.

WHEN a country club discovers, after several years of operation, that its annual income has an exasperating way of falling short of annual expenses, despite the greatest care by the board to budget intelligently and operate on an economical basis, propaganda is pretty sure to start for the establishment of "social" memberships, carrying all club privileges except golf. Behind such memberships is the theory that in any community there are a certain number of desirable persons who would make fine additions to the membership personnel, but because they, at present, have no interest in golf, cannot be interested in joining the club. By offering a non-golfing membership to such desirable prospects at a cost somewhat below the price of full club privileges, a number of them can be brought into the club.

Thus, through an increase in membership, clubhouse business is augmented; the dining room has a chance to break even on the year, and the income of all other departments within the clubhouse picks up. Yet with all this boosting of clubhouse business, the golf course carries the same traffic as before, since these social memberships do not include use of the course.

These, broadly outlined, are the common advantages claimed for social memberships, against which are several points that bespeak caution before taking the step. Chief among them is the question of whether the increased use of the club's departments will return a profit adequate to permit an enlarged social program. Obviously, added emphasis must be placed on dances, card parties, and other social events to attract and hold the interest of the social members so they will continue to patronize the club.

If the club in question has in the past been strictly and solely a golfing proposition, the decision to sell social memberships will entail a considerable change in the club's organization, in its yearly budget, and in the number of employes. Such a club will do well to weigh carefully the physical and financial cost before making the change.

Another argument frequently heard against establishing social memberships is to the effect that by enlarging the entertainment program, featuring the dining service and playing up, through well-directed publicity, the advantages of belonging to the club, enough local prestige can be built up to make a regular full-price membership in the club a social pre-

rogative of the community. Men who do not golf will join at regular initiation fees and at regular dues because they and their families must have access to the social headquarters of the town.

Without this aura of exclusiveness, the non-golfing prospect will answer, with justification, that he can see no reason why he should pay for golf privileges when he does not intend to take advantage of them. But if belonging to the local country club is "the thing to do," if it fills an important niche in the community's social scheme of things, it is a different story; the non-golfer will join even though he must pay for privileges he will never use.

Here are some of the factors that should influence a club's decision for or against creating social memberships: Has the club tennis courts; a swimming pool; frequent dances; frequent bridge parties; facilities for horseback riding? Is the club near enough to town to compete successfully against local restaurants, movies, road houses and dance halls?

How about the other golf clubs in the district; are they better equipped to handle non-golfing business? Have any of these neighboring clubs social members at present, and if so, how well do local residents react to the opportunity? Why would a non-golfer prefer your club to these others?

Prohibition has affected the problem to a greater degree than most people realize. Where formerly there were restaurants and other havens for better class people who wanted to step out in lively, but well-behaved fashion, there is no place to go nowadays with the exception of road houses, which are run wild and loose, and are on the taboo list for these residents. Hence, where careful scrutiny of applicants before admission is practiced, there is considerable lure to a golf club membership, even without golfing privileges.

Recently GOLFDOM circularized a number of golf clubs throughout the United States on the social membership question, and found that this type of membership is offered in about one club out of six. Since this mailing intentionally was made to clubs located near the larger cities, we believe this proportion is low as compared with figures on the country as a whole; there are fewer counter attractions to a country club membership in smaller communities.

Returns indicated that dues for social memberships are generally about 60% of the regular dues, while initiation fees are

made very nominal. No equity in the club's assets goes with them, nor are these memberships subject to assessments. Some of them permit week-day use of the golf course on payment of regular green-fees; others prohibit a social member from the course at all times, even as a guest of a regular member.

Golf clubs fortunate enough to have a full membership roster and that glory of glories, a long, healthy waiting list, sometimes find it advisable to create a class of associate membership for those on the waiting list. In such cases, regular memberships are sold only to associates within the club.

To an applicant, the privilege of belonging as an associate member, until such time as his name comes up for regular membership, gives him the opportunity to mingle with his future clubmates and select his particular cronies, and permits him to participate in all club activities except golf.

To the club, this creation of a membership to include the waiting list brings a certain income to the club otherwise lost, and increases the departmental business within the clubhouse.

Then, too, just as it is a human failing to want whatever is hard to get, so the creation of an added step in achieving full membership in the club adds a certain lure to it. Clubs with a waiting list find selling memberships much simpler than clubs with partially filled rosters.

On the whole, clubs will benefit from the creation of social memberships. Nearly every community contains a number of men who would be interested in joining under such a plan, and even though the opportunity is grasped by only a dozen or so men, the added house business from them and their families justifies the step. It is the simplest way to secure volume house business without increasing course congestion.

BURKE ANNOUNCES LINE FOR PROS ONLY

A new headliner in the Burke family of clubs is a line of woods and irons that will be distributed only through professional shops. Both woods and irons are supplied in registered sets; the wood clubs in sets of three or pairs, and the irons in sets of six or nine. Iron heads are chromium finished.

The new clubs are packed in handsome boxes instead of the canvas carriers previously used.