

# No Uniform Classification of CLUB MEMBERSHIPS

## House Operation Survey Shows

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**C**ONTINUING GOLFDOM'S probe into standard practices of clubhouse operating methods, an investigation of the types of membership ordinarily offered at various clubs is necessary in order to understand what is behind these policies. This article is based on the questionnaire sent out recently to 200 representative country clubs, located in every state in the Union.

Analysis of the questionnaires returned indicates that the average number of members (of all classes) is over 300, and is the first surprise uncovered by the survey. Published figures on the membership roster of clubs have previously given estimates of 200 to 250. GOLFDOM'S survey indicates this figure is too low.

Dues at clubs returning the questionnaire range from as low as \$20 a year up to the top figure of \$400. This does not mean that there are not certain ultra-exclusive clubs in the country charging far higher dues, but in this particular questionnaire, no more expensive club made a return. Average dues seem to run around \$150.

### All Sorts of Members

The classification of various types of memberships in country clubs is almost legion. In addition to regular, women's, junior and non-resident membership classifications, found in practically all clubs, each club has at least two other types of membership under various names, carrying various privileges and at varying dues. We find memberships for widows, female relatives of regular members, for students, army and navy officers, the clergy, and the press. We find numerous varieties of temporary memberships, generally known as "playing" or "seasonal" memberships. And we find that each club has established its own schedule of dues and initiation fee for these various classifications.

### Non-Residents

About 80 per cent of the clubs making the return have non-resident memberships,

and ordinarily a man may qualify as a non-resident if he lives without the county, or which is saying about the same thing, more than 50 miles from the club. Dues are generally \$50 a year, although in some cases they run as high as \$150 and in others as low as \$30.

As a general rule, a non-resident membership in a club carries no privilege for other members of the non-resident's family, although in a few cases wives of non-residents may play the course on payment of regular green fees. A number of clubs have two classes of non-resident members—depending on the distance away from the club the non-resident lives. The Losantiville Country Club (Cincinnati), for example, has a non-resident membership for those living within 100 miles of the club, at \$100 a year, and those living beyond 100 miles, at \$50 a year.

The Teugega Country Club (Rome, N. Y.) has non-resident members living outside a 5-mile radius of the club, but within 20 miles; these members pay \$75 a year. All outside of the 20-mile radius pay \$25 a year.

At about half of the clubs making returns, wives of regular members are permitted privileges of the course and clubhouse without payment of dues, but their use of the course is generally restricted to week days and Saturday mornings, with no play permitted Saturday afternoons, Sundays or holidays. At those clubs charging dues for wives of members, the yearly cost runs from \$10 to as high as \$100, with the general average around \$30.

Practically all clubs have junior memberships, and the age limit in four clubs out of five is 21 years. In some cases, clubs permit junior play at a nominal annual fee up to the age of 21, after which these juniors pay increasingly larger dues each year until they reach the age of 30, at which time they must take out a regular membership in the club. This type of membership has been established to aid the young fellow just starting in business

who can't afford to pay the full rate for the golf privileges. In 90 per cent of the clubs, junior members must be sons of regular members. In the other 10 per cent, any young fellow may join the club, provided he is sponsored by a regular member, at the reduced junior dues.

### Social Memberships

A number of clubs have social memberships carrying all privileges of the club with the exception of golf, at dues considerably less than the regular membership, generally around \$30 a year. Occasionally these social members may play golf, on week days only, at the customary green fees. Inducements to social members other than the privileges of eating and entertaining at the clubhouse include dances, card parties and tennis, and in some cases swimming and winter sports.

### Special Members

A number of clubs reported unusual types of membership that have considerable possibilities for clubs needing added house business. The Orange County Golf Club of Middletown, N. Y., for example, charges regular dues of \$50 for man and wife and \$10 extra for each additional playing member of the family. Single men pay \$40; single women, \$35. The Country Club of Birmingham (Ala.) has a temporary membership at a cost of \$50 per year for golfers temporarily in the city. The Sioux City (Ia.) Country Club has a special membership for widows of members at \$40 a year, as compared with the regular membership fee of \$75. This club also has a special membership for clergymen at \$50. The South Bend (Ind.) Country Club allows students to become members at a special fee of \$25 a year. The Dubuque (Ia.) Golf Club has a membership for \$45 a year open to men under 24 years of age and to women regardless of age. Children of members may play golf or tennis for \$5 a year.

The Losantiville Country Club at Cincinnati has a special women's membership at \$50 a year for those not relatives of regular members. Widows of regular members may have full privileges at the same price. Wives pay \$30. The Lenox Hills Golf Club, New York City, offers a special playing membership at dues of \$71.50 per year, but in addition these members must pay the daily green fees each time they play.

Attention of country clubs located in resort territory is called to the special

membership offered by the Bel-Air Country Club of Los Angeles, known as a "temporary" membership. It costs \$100 for 60 days. These members must be sponsored by a regular member and approved by the Board of Governors.

### Privilege Cards

At Detroit, Mich., the Plum Hollow Golf Club issues privilege cards each year free of charge to 5 clergymen, 5 newspaper men, officers of the Detroit District G. A., and to the presidents and secretaries of all golf clubs in the district. This is a splendid idea and one that could well be followed by almost every golf club for the purpose of creating local good will.

In addition to an investigation of the various types of memberships, GOLFDOM'S questionnaire delved into the subject of green fees and guest privileges with some interesting results. The great majority of clubs charge \$2 for week-day play and an increased amount, generally \$3, \$4 or \$5, for play on Saturday or Sunday. In some instances, out-of-town guests pay smaller green fees than guests whose residence is in the immediate vicinity of the club.

There are varying restrictions on the number of times the same guest may be brought to the club. In some, he may be brought any number of times without limit. In others, they are limited to once a month, twice a month, six times a year, etc. As a general rule, there is no restriction as to the number of times a non-resident may play the course.

A few golf clubs allow any golfer, whether introduced by a member or not, to play the course upon payment of regular green fees. A few of these clubs restrict these un-introduced guests to men who are members of some U. S. G. A. golf club. Fully three-fourths of the clubs making returns, however, do not permit strangers to play their courses without introduction by a member.

The questionnaire made it very apparent that almost every type of membership one can think of has been tried at some club or another. The prime reason behind this wide variety is to increase the patronage at the club and thus boost the house business, generally without increasing course congestion unduly. Among the classifications mentioned in this article are some that will fit nicely into the needs of many of the nation's clubs, and can well be adopted, particularly where added patronage would be welcome.