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H. H. Ramsey, President
U. S. Golf Association

U S G A CHIEF Suggests New Year Policy to Club Department Heads

THE business of golf equipment, accessories and supplies has grown to be an enormous one in this country and I am satisfied it is going to continue to increase. Increased business, of course, means increased competition, and the result is going to be that the customers for this kind of merchandise get more for their money.

Many golf clubs have taken advantage of business depression in the past year to reconstruct their operations just as many businesses have done. This is the time to make ready for the prosperous days which are not far ahead, and every golf professional, greenkeeper and club manager can profit by taking a lesson from what business is doing in this regard.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "H. H. Ramsey".

1930 Golf Leaves 3-Point Legacy to 1931

By HERB GRAFFIS

1. More Machine Maintenance
2. Lower Interest Payments
3. Simpler Service Standards

CRIES of "fore" sounded even above the wails of general business during 1930. The year's golf play at private and public courses set a new high mark. At a number of representative private clubs in metropolitan areas play was from

15% to double ahead of that of 1929. The popularity of the golf course as a dug-out in the business battle-front was further marked by the figures of business done by the leading makers of golf playing equipment.



Not many new big courses were opened in 1930 but plenty of work was in process of completion. This is part of one of the jobs that will be opened in spring, 1931, after 18 months of conditioning. It is the ninth at Beverly Shores, in the Indiana dunes bordering Lake Michigan, five miles from Michigan City. It is tagged by its architects, Macdonald and Maddox, as "a seaside course in the middle of the United States."

Reports from the leading makers put the 1930 golf ball and club business at a new high. Golf playing equipment business for the year was more than a third of the entire volume of sporting goods business, despite the announcement of the new ball and consequent hesitancy in buying clubs for the new ball play until the new lines of the manufacturers were definitely decided upon.

Plant Investment of U. S. Golf Clubs in 1930 Reached the Total of \$852,891,408

For the first time in the game's United States history the number of steady addicts came close to the two million mark. Division of the play, according to an extensive national survey, was:

1,991 18-hole clubs averaging 401 players	798,391
3,300 9-hole clubs averaging 178 players	587,400
423 Public and daily fee 18-hole courses averaging 1,100 players	465,300
142 Public and daily fee 9-hole courses averaging 325 players	46,150
	<hr/>
	1,897,241

The leadership of golf as the national pastime continued to be emphasized by comparison with baseball attendance fig-

ures. Major league baseball attendance again registered around the 11 million mark, while a conservative estimate of the number of rounds of golf played on the courses in National and American league city territories was 15 million. Again the growth of women's golf play was a feature of the year. Women accounted for 12% of the game's 20% increase in players during the year. Rate of growth in women's golf for the last five years points to more women than men playing the game by 1940.

New Ball Is Accepted

Speculation as to the business effect of the new larger and lighter ball died out toward the latter part of the year. During the middle of the 1930 season some golfers laid away stocks of the present ball, but course tests culminating in the Pasadena open showed that the new ball made no especial difference in the game of dub or star with the exception of providing a better brassie shot for the inexpert player.

Manufacturers of course maintenance equipment started the year at a gait which promised a volume of sales exceeding all previous figures but were stopped short by the prolonged drought that put grass growth at a standstill. Notwithstanding this development, most of the course equipment and supply people went through the season equal to, if not slightly ahead of the 1929 top figure. General business



One of the reasons why the golf clubs did well during 1930 in their appointed work of providing a hide-out from dull care. Sit in this men's grill at the Annandale (Calif.) C. C. and worldly woes vanish.

conditions figured in the course maintenance equipment and supply situation more than in the playing equipment sales. Officials of golf clubs passed out the word to their greenkeepers that the new equipment purchases were to be kept at a minimum. In the majority of cases the maintenance equipment was patched together and kept going to the extent that possibilities of service after the end of the 1930 season were utterly exhausted. This, of course, means a large volume of replacement purchases by the clubs next season. The same general condition and probable result is found in the clubhouse equipment situation.

Reduce Interest Charges

Nineteen-thirty was not a year for capital expansion or much new building in the golf field. The major new job of the year, that of the \$3,000,000 Country Club of Cleveland, was a project completed this year, but in progress of work for two years previous. Most of the golf clubs were content to sit tight and pay off on their borrowings. So general was this practice that competent observers have figured a reduc-

tion of annual interest charges at the 18-hole clubs averaging \$1,000 a club for the year. With 1,991 private 18-hole clubs operating, this means a tidy saving now available for taking advantage of the prevailing low prices for clubhouse alteration or new construction or course capital improvements. In the latter class, fairway watering easily rates as the leading item. At the prevailing rate, 90% of the 18-hole courses will have fairway watering by 1934.

The end of 1930 found 5,856 golf courses in the U. S.; 2,414 of them having 18-hole courses and 3,442 nine-hole courses. General business slackness was reflected in the slump of new course construction. For the four years, 1925-1929, the average annual rate of increase of golf clubs was 12%. During 1930 the increase drooped to 8%. About three-fifths of the new clubs started during the year were nine-hole clubs.

An interesting tip-off to general business conditions could be seen in clubhouse postings of delinquent members. The earlier months of the season saw posting sheets, particularly at the clubs of 10 years' life

or younger, rivaling the telephone directory. Many club memberships became among the stiffest of frozen assets, especially in the metropolitan districts where golf clubs had been born at a guinea pig rate during the previous six years. There was a distress market in the memberships of many of the newer clubs, with the law of supply and demand revising the membership transfer by-laws of many clubs. Toward the latter part of the season the fatalities of the earlier bear market stage were out of the picture and, as a general thing, the postings were those of the chronically careless.

Public Courses Set Records

Daily fee and public courses had their banner year in 1930. In very few cases of established daily fee courses in the larger cities did the earnings fall below 20% on the invested capital.

The miniature golf course came, saw and for the greater part folded up like a bridge table, leaving a host of butchers, bakers and candle-stick makers (who opened their courses in July after the first public frenzy had waned) wondering what had happened. The Tom Thumb people, on excellent authority, are said to have made in the neighborhood of \$2,000,000 during their crowded year of glory, with the owners of the various Tom Thumb courses *who got in early*, easily doubling this sum. Indoor miniature golf courses, at first thought to be the answer to the pros' winter employment problem, started ambitiously enough, with plenty of establishments having from \$15,000 to \$50,000 invested. Trace of many of these places, after four months of operation, is evident only in a few expiring bubbles coming up from forty fathoms of red ink. However, the miniature craze undoubtedly jabbed the golf hypo into many susceptibles and the operators of public courses

are expecting to harvest in 1931 the crop sown in those departed days when three weeks was the earliest one could expect delivery on putters. Prospects for 1931 point to a development of pitch-and-putt courses with greens approximating those of regulation courses.

More Machinery at Clubs

Mechanization of course and clubhouse operation registered decided advances in 1930 despite the reluctance of club officials to spend much money for equipment. That factor of manual labor being 70% of the greenkeeping budget promoted more extensive mechanization of maintenance operations and the inability to get and house the right kind of help for clubhouse unexpected peak loads provided the urge toward better equipment in the club kitchens.

Lack of water at the courses, a serious feature of the 1930 season, in some respects proved a blessing in disguise. Many courses found their greens in better shape during 1930 than ever before, thus confirming the expert suspicion that overwatering is a general fault.

The year had an unexpected result for the managers. With the slogan of the times being "save till it hurts," clubhouse staffs were cut and the membership, knowing the situation, was easier in its demand

(Continued on page 55)



Fewer men, more machinery, the outstanding features of course maintenance in 1930, is exhibited at Peoria (Ill.) C. C. where a versatile Caterpillar tractor hauls a fertilizer-spreader as part of its work in contempt of traditional time-clock restrictions.

GOLFDOM that the organization's officials are at work on a standardized form for greenkeepers' applications, which is expected to be ready for publication in the February issue of GOLFDOM.

The helpful comment of club hiring officials on this matter will be welcomed by GOLFDOM and passed along to the officials of the various associations as assistance in combating the miserable extravagance that is now a deplorable feature of golf club management.

Lessons of 1930

(Continued from page 12)

for immediate service. Taking advantage of more time available for cooking, the standard of clubhouse food service came nearer to the point where the managers and chefs wanted it to be, reputations were established for superb food, and house volume increased accordingly.

Pros Prosper

With the pros, the year was the best money-maker in the game's annals. A great part of the increase was due to unmistakable signs of pro merchandising improvement for, although the year started out with a bang, the prolonged hot wave of early summer had a decided effect in curtailing play. Slapping with this summer slump proved a tonic for the pro merchants. Extra selling pressure was put on during the closing months of the year. The steel shafted irons and the new wood and iron faces for the new ball supplied the high spots of the pro selling. Installment selling, particularly of women's matched sets, was adopted successfully by many pros.

Summarizing the 1930 business for the golf field, it might be said the business was so good in contrast to general business conditions, that every business factor in the field really studied and profited from the situation. Golf has grown from a game into big business in such a comparatively brief time that pauses for the purpose of getting bearings did not become part of the order of things until general business, dancing with tears in its eyes, suggested foresight to prevent the golf field participating in the sad spectacle.

Profiting from a clinic on the plight into which general business found itself due to an excess of blind hope and ebullience, the golf field confronts 1931 on the firmest business basis the sport-business has had in the United States.

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