

Fee Courses, Golf's Topsy, Show Organization Need

By HERB GRAFFIS

AMONG THE others being shown some of adversity's alleged sweet uses are the daily fee courses. The necessity of taking an appraisal of assets, operating methods and opportunities has been forced on these courses to the extent that the advisability of collective enterprise is appearing to the fee course owners.

What these owners can do to promote the game and their own profits when, as and if they ever go together after their general problems warrants some action.

GOLFDOM's survey of the 1931 season showed, as of Nov. 15, the following division of courses in the U. S.:

Private clubs	4,448
Daily fee	700
Municipal	543

There are no figures now available on the investment in daily fee golf plants, or the business they handle annually, but it is obvious that the fee business is a substantial part of the golf field.

Unfortunately, there are a number of daily fee courses that are owned by men who got in on a boom market and with the idea that "everybody plays golf." They have learned plenty in taking their baptism of fire and not the least of the lessons they have learned is that golf, like everything else, has to be sold these days. The customers don't gallop wildly to crowd through the gates, with the exception of week end play, which is one of those "feast or famine" matters. They also have learned that Old Man Interest just keeps rolling along.

With the overhead a lot of them have and the necessity of vigorous business promotion, there is reason for the fee course owners to begin a market development campaign. They have a fine selling story to tell, but the telling is being done in isolated cases only.

Prospects are fine—but not without some problems, as the growth of public golf may cut into the fee course development in a way that involves a delicate matter of ethics. In the Chicago district 717,194 rounds were played on the eight 18-hole and the two 9-hole park and forest pre-

serve courses at prices lower than the fee courses could offer. This is a volume that would mean good profits to the fee courses that are paying heavy taxes and it brings up a subject that public and fee course men could debate to a draw from now on.

The 5-day week is here with increased possibilities for sales of golf. This calls for prompt action.

Selling Is Neglected

Some of the men who have come into fee course business from private club and hotel operation have expressed surprise at the general neglect of fee course business development. They wonder, in view of the casual way in which a good part of fee course sales promoting is done, that there is any volume of play at all. Price cutting, rather than advertising or skilled personal solicitation of business, has been the recourse when play slumped.

One of the newcomers to the fee course business is C. H. Garard, manager of the White Pines layout (Chicago district). Garard formerly was manager of Barrington Hills C. C., one of the de luxe private clubs in the district and has other club experience and a hotel business career as his background.

The White Pines establishment opened last summer and even though the course was in play before turf conditions were satisfactory, there was the usual Sunday lineup of players who could not get on for a few hours. In making an effort to find out just what could be done to take care of these people so they wouldn't become disinterested and so they might invest some more play money, Garard sought information from other fee course owners. With the exception of a fee course owners' association in Chicago, there was no place to go for the answers, except to individuals.

Says Garard: "Certainly this problem of handling waiting players is one that all fee courses in metropolitan districts have to puzzle them. Why is it that there isn't a report available on the methods being employed by leading operators? How much of an investment in a swimming pool would be justified? How big should the

practice putting green be? How should its use be handled? These and a number of other details ought to be available in a business as big as daily-fee golf is today.

"Standard contract forms for tournaments, group promotion efforts, tournaments, etc., all should be matters of collective interest, and although these details are simply points that come to mind casually, they show how all of us in the business are missing something by not working together."

Revive Association Talk

A mild effort was made to form a national fee course owners' association two years ago during a golf show at Chicago. There was wide-spread interest in the venture, but the absence of some one who could and would volunteer to undertake the large amount of work involved in forming the proposed association choked the enterprise in its crib. Then too, the boys were feeling quite independent and certain of doing better with the lone wolf technique, which is nothing unusual in a new business. Now the signals seem to call for a concerted business development effort and an exchange of information for the common good.

Lately GOLFDOM has been getting and answering requests for much financial, operating and sales promoting information concerning fee courses. Some of the requests have asked if there is a national fee course organization. There isn't one, brothers, but it looks like there should be and GOLFDOM will be pleased to see what the fee course owners have to write on this business of getting together.

GREENS SUBSOIL

Structure and Fertilization for Good, Permanent Turf

By WM. H. TUCKER
Golf Architect and Engineer

IN ORDER TO secure good, permanent golf turf there are certain fundamentals that must be understood just as there are basic fundamentals that must be understood and mastered before one can develop a good golf swing. In agrostology, the art of growing turf, the fundamentals come under 6 groupings: substructure,

drainage, topsoil texture, internal respiration, percolation and sanitation.

The substructure must be healthy, underdrained if necessary, to permit slow percolation and aeration and to conserve moisture. The top 6 inches of the surface should be fine and granular in texture so that the subsoil understructure may carry out its mission of soil sanitation. Fine turf-forming grasses will not adapt themselves to any kind of soil, therefore the soil surface must be adapted to the type of grass desired. If the surface soil is right but the substructure is wrong, it will be only a matter of time until the trouble reflects upon the one responsible for the original construction.

Because timothy, blue grass and clover are successfully grown in the vicinity is no sign that a green can be made upon the natural soil as quickly as one newly seeded on the properly constructed green or of equal quality. These grasses are not desired and if this error is made it will be many years before a fine turf is produced. It is not so much grass that is needed for a fine green but a good turf. Grass will grow almost anywhere, but it takes intelligent construction to produce a desirable turf.

Time a Factor

Therefore the subsoils must work in conjunction with the surface soils to favor and produce the kind of grasses desired. At least one or two months must be allowed for the soils to perform their functions, the grass seeds to develop and to nurse the young plants so that they will mature into a turf of fineness and color with dense, creeping roots. With proper construction and suitable soils only two grasses are necessary in some states; in others three varieties are needed for the ideal putting green.

An ideal green, when established, should receive at intervals a very mild compost dressing and must not be overfed; neither should forcing chemicals be used unless advised by an expert who knows positively what he desires to bring about. An organic dressing composed of humus, sheep manure, sea sand and good light loam, finely screened, will take care of the average good green.

The correct grasses of a putting green turf are not rapid growers and must be given water and sufficient time to develop their creeping roots. If force-fed against time there is a risk of the bents becoming coarse in texture and reverting into