

FORESIGHT GOT MEMBERS

Ably Run Small Town Club Solved Problem in Winter

PROBABLY enough credit isn't given to smaller town golf clubs for their resourceful way of handling membership and operating problems. How many big city clubs solved their membership problems during the winter? Very few, because the general notion is that no one can be interested in northern golf during the cold months.

Well, in Belvidere, Ill. the officials of the BelMar C. C. thought differently and if you want to read about a membership situation that will make many clubs envious, see what Charles Ames, treasurer of BelMar, tells GOLFDOM:

"BelMar C. C. was organized in 1919. During the following year, a sporty 9-hole golf course was laid out on the banks of meandering Coon creek, 2½ miles east of Belvidere on Grant highway. The course has developed into one of the most picturesque in northern Illinois and has attracted many visiting golfers. On the opposite bank of the small creek, and in a spot that overlooks the entire course, an attractive clubhouse, affording the conveniences and comforts necessary to the social life of a country club, is located.

"For 12 years, BelMar C. C. has had a membership of approximately 150 members. Of these, about 100 members have been subscribing or stock-holding members. Those desiring this class of membership purchased one at a cost of \$100 and have paid dues of \$50 per year, both plus the government tax. Other classes of membership included Lady, Junior, and non-Resident and these classes paid dues of \$25 yearly. The membership has been made up of residents of Belvidere, Maren-go, and Garden Prairie.

"In the autumn of 1931, the officials and board of directors of BelMar determined that it would be necessary, in order to balance the budget for 1932, to establish a new class of membership in order that the shrinkage of older memberships might be overcome. It was conceded that there would be a shrinkage during the present depressed times.

"Therefore, a canvass of the older sub-

scribing members was made and it was found that at least 75 of the share-holding members would remain as members in 1932 on the same basis as before, that is, at \$50 a year dues. It was also determined that a large percent of the lady and non-resident members would continue as before. It was then decided that a new class of membership, to be known as Temporary Associate Membership, would be inaugurated. These memberships were to be sold as a season ticket, entitling the member, and his wife and family, if married, to the full privileges of the golf course, clubhouse, dining room, locker-room, showers, and attendance at card parties and dances; in fact to all privileges held by subscribing members except the opportunity of voting. The new class of members was to hold no interest in the club property, however. A limit of 75 such memberships was decided upon and the fee for this "season ticket" was to be \$25, plus tax.

"The club president, Frank T. Moran, publisher and editor of the Belvidere *Daily Republican*, was quick to see the possibility of interesting a large number of local residents in this new membership and he appointed a committee of five members under the chairmanship of J. E. Tabor, business manager of his paper. Mr. Tabor was on the job immediately and before the Christmas holidays had signed up more than 40 new members under this plan. With every application was a \$10 payment on account and the applications as signed called for the balance of the amount to be paid by May 15. At time of writing, 60 memberships have been signed and the club has not yet opened its season.

"The campaign has been successful because the club directors were foresighted enough to anticipate the need for a lower priced membership in the private club during these times. It is evident that a golfer prefers the private club to public courses if it is brought within his reach, for, practically all the new members had in other years, played golf on the public links available nearby. Then too, the early campaign, long ahead of the actual playing season, tended to interest.

"BelMar's financial matters should not concern its directors this year. If times are better next year or the year after, BelMar can return to its old policy on membership. At any rate, new golfers are coming along and learning to appreciate the privileges of the private club, and they will long remain as members of the club."