

# Managers Differ on Beer Tide Being Golden at Clubs

**J**UST WHAT the return of beer is going to do to country club business is still an uncertainty so far as representative leading club managers are concerned.

Much attention is being paid to the service arrangements for beer at golf clubs. Instead of the old bars so popular when golf was a man's game, new facilities are going to be installed at practically every club in states where beer is a certainty. It is one of the spots where a club can spend money and be almost positive the investment will be amortized quickly, even though the beer revenue some optimists expect will not be forthcoming.

While the weight of expert opinion is that increased house revenue directly attributable to beer is going to help float away some of the heavy fixed charges, there are several experienced managers who warn that too much cannot be expected of the amber tide.

The manager of one of the country's most famous clubs (an eastern organization), expresses the following opinion:

"Golf clubs cannot fail to benefit from the return of beer. Money now being spent on bootleg liquor and alleged beer will be spent in the club. The majority of members will give up hard liquor when good beer is obtainable. The fact that the price of a bottle of bootleg scotch or rye will buy two good club dinners and plenty of beer is sure to result in more restaurant business."

Another famous club's manager tells GOLFDOM: "The sale of beer at country clubs will certainly increase cafe sales and I believe also will increase the sale of sandwiches, etc., thereby increasing restaurant revenue. It also will tend to foster a feeling of good fellowship among the members."

Not the least of the club managers' problems under prohibition has been the spirit of battle stirred up by the vicious bootleg beverages. A member carrying a burden of warfare hootch is transformed from a reasonable, quiet citizen into a whirling, loud talking demonstrator of assault and

battery. For some reason the club force seems to be the first line of attack. Practically all of the unpleasant situations in country club operation have had some element of alcohol as the fuse, according to most managers. With beer again available that spirit of good fellowship to which the previously quoted manager refers will become a substantial asset to club management.

## No Deluge

But, along with the questionable improvement resulting from the return of beer, it is not going to be a self-sufficient and complete answer to an important part of club financial problems.

After the first reaction has ended and people are reconciled to beer, it is going to dawn on a lot of clubs that beer will have to be sold instead of merely served. Such gluttonies and idiocies as the Brew Year's eve celebrations in many cities marking the return of beer are as completely unwarranted as the activities of the prohibition racketeers who knocked out beer. There is no substantial significance to a mob of merry-making guzzlers diving back into suds for the first few weeks. Beer as a drink for moderates should add a good volume to golf club revenue and it is on that basis that foresighted managers are proceeding.

## Beer, Women and Golf

What is changing the beer picture a whole lot from the bygone days at the golf club is the amount of women's play. Bar location, appearance and service now must take into cognizance the fact that women's patronage now is around 40% of the total at representative metropolitan district clubs. Chances are that women will go for beer despite the dire threats of blubbery welts around the middle of the human form divine, which have been broadcast to women by the dry forces. They can walk off the beer and open their pores and be ahead on the health score during a round of golf.

After several years during which caution has been pounded into club managers they are in a frame of mind that does not permit them to accept beer's return as the magical act that will make everything hotsy-totsy around the clubs.

The manager of one of the big eastern clubs hands out an opinion on beer's return that is worth considering. He tells GOLFDOM:

"Candidly, I cannot say that I am over enthusiastic, or very jubilant as to the results which the sale of this special commodity will bring about. As a matter of fact, I am inclined to feel that after the first 30 or 60 days' spasm is over, that the net returns and the improvement of business conditions expected will be very disappointing.

"As you particularly know, from your part of the country, the sale of beer will be nothing new. It will not be a novelty for any of us to step into a bar—put our foot on the rail—and order what we want, because we have been doing that anyway. In addition to that, I feel that the general character of the people has changed so within the last eight or ten years, that it will be quite some time before they are educated to appreciate and use this commodity as our 'old-timers' did. Further than that—considering the crises that we have been going through for the past three years, combined with the banking situation existing at the moment, the average man will have little money to spend. Even with the return of business, it will be a matter of some time before he has pulled himself out of the 'red,' and I mean by that—that he has relieved himself of personal debts, such as mortgages, bank loans and 'what-not.'

"We have all learned a lesson of frugality and economy in the past few years which is going to linger with us for no little time, and I believe that the average person will have in mind the idea of 'packing away a sock full of dough' before he begins to scatter it around in entertaining.

"In addition, I believe that when beer, or any other commodity of this type is thrown at us from all directions, as it undoubtedly will be, by grocery stores, delicatessens, and all sorts of restaurants, etc., that the desire for it will very soon be little or nothing.

"Don't get the idea that I am pessimistic, but I have been in this type of business for nearly twenty-five years, and have han-

dled this commodity under almost every condition, and I cannot see that the sale of beer will be a panacea for any of our important financial ills—at any rate, not for some little time.

"I believe the situation will be somewhat the same as that confronting the bottle manufacturers today—that the profits will go in the bung-hole and out of the spigot. In other words, they have felt that beer would have a tremendous increase in business, forgetting the fact that there might possibly be a tremendous decrease in the sale of mineral and sparkling waters."

Naturally one of the angles that is going to figure in determining country club beer profits is to what extent beer will cut down the ginger-ale and mineral water profits. Some of the managers who are experienced observers of human nature around the locker-rooms say that after a few drinks of beer the hard liquor drinkers will consider that they are not getting action quick enough and will go for the red and white stuff with set-ups. If so, it will be the answer to the problem brought forth by a manager at one of the deluxe midwestern clubs. He says:

"Beer alone will not increase your revenue very much, as it will not change the whiskey drinker. He will continue drinking his highballs. It will only affect those members who have been beer drinkers before prohibition and this is only about 15% of the membership. Then, take our club—we sold two different kinds of near beer, Kingsbury (light) and Atlas Muenchener (dark). One cost 8c, the other 10c per bottle. It was sold for 25c. With the return of beer you won't be able to charge more than 15c per bottle which will decrease your profits unless you can sell 35% more than you have been selling in the past. I have always favored selling ginger-ale or charged water, as profits on these items are high. For instance, I have been paying about 8c for a pint bottle of Canada Dry and been selling it for 30c which leaves a profit of 22c per bottle. Ordinary charged water is sold at the same price with the same profit so you can see for yourself if members are going to change over from highballs to beer it will actually decrease your profits instead of increasing them."

So the beer situation at country clubs simmers down to what the brewers are going to do to restore the business in a wholesale and innocent beverage.