

Smart Sportsmanship Can Save Clubs from Dumb Business

By JOE ROSEMAN

IT'S A BUYER'S market in golf club memberships and too many private clubs blunder into making this market one that sells them out, broke.

Some of the private clubs have believed that when they let down the bars and go daily fee they are on the way toward the solution of their problems. They haven't realized that when they go daily fee it is going to take a lot of individual fee play to equal the income from one private club member's annual dues, nor have they realized that when a private club goes daily fee it means that at least 1,000 prospective members for a private club are converted into intermittent patrons of the course when operated on a daily fee basis. I make this conservative estimate of 1,000 after reviewing the experiences of clubs in metropolitan districts over the last three years.

The private clubs that, due to excessive overhead or casual executive management, are in unhappy condition should realize that their plight is not going to be relieved by a change to a condition in which they expect customers will flock to them. The customers won't swarm in. Fee course operation requires selling, just as does private club memberships. The private club that gets busy and keeps busy selling its memberships will not get into such shape that a switch to fee course operation seems the only way out.

Dual Operation Unsatisfactory

Clubs have tried to operate half private and half fee. It doesn't work. The fee player gets his golf cheaper and gets the same clubhouse and social privileges as the private member, at lower cost. Consequently the private member will not continue to pay the premium for playing with a carefully selected membership or for the enjoyment of clubhouse privileges that, on a fee basis, become about as exclusive as the Union Station.

Failure of some private clubs to insist on restriction of the number of times a guest can play during the year has played

havoc with their membership prospects. Strict insistence on the guest restrictions and a return of the green fees to the 1929 basis will do a lot toward bettering the membership solicitation results and standing of a large number of clubs. If a man plays more than five times a year at a private club, he should become a member, or the club is not being operated properly as a private club. Certainly none but the chiselers would expect guest privileges more than five times a year, and the persistent presence of chiselers at any club does it no good, either now or in the future.

Letting down the bars to trade tournaments has made membership at some private clubs highly undesirable to those members who expect, and are paying for, private club operation. The regular member pays the cost and the guest, with no responsibility toward the club, rides practically free, so where do the officials of clubs that are mobbed with trade tournaments discharge their duties toward the men who have taken private memberships?

Let me tell you of a case in which two large private clubs competed for a trade tournament that was plainly an event for a fee course. There were 750 players in this tournament. The private clubs started bidding at \$4.50 for all day golf, lunch and dinner. The first competitive slash was to \$4.00, then to \$3.50, and the club that got the tournament finally offered \$2.75. I have had private and daily fee experience from 1904 and at this writing am interested in both types of club. I can tell you, with some authority, that when a club takes a tournament for two meals and all day golf at \$2.75 it is either being gypped financially or is compelled to handle the tournament in a way that does the club's reputation harm.

In Chicago we have 51 open daily fee courses. Every Tom, Dick and Harry got the idea that the sure road to riches was through a daily fee course. From a mutually satisfactory basis of \$2.00 week

days, \$2.50 Saturdays and \$3.00 Sundays and holidays, the depression and rate war has cut down prices until golf is being sold week days as low as 25c. The rate war hasn't been confined to fee clubs; so-called private clubs entered the competition and spread the ruination. The worst of it is that volume of play has steadily fallen off and the membership prospects of those so-called private clubs have been vanishing.

Minimum Rates the Hope

In territory like the Chicago district a minimum of \$1.00 week days and a maximum of \$1.75, up to a Sunday and holiday minimum of \$2.00 and maximum of \$3.00 would allow the courses to operate with a chance for a profit, pay their help living wages and still provide golf facilities of good character at a reasonable cost.

As long as human beings retain their shortcomings we probably will have those who figure that they can outsmart and undercut the other fellow and are willing to do that, even though the minimums suggested would permit the fellows with lower operating costs to make more money. These lower costs would overcome whatever disadvantages of location the courses with reduced overhead and operating charges might have.

In the meanwhile, unless the course owners can get together and honestly adhere to a price scale that will prevent serious damage to the business, there is going to be a clamor for a strict government code that undoubtedly will be harder on the fellows who now think they have a chiseling advantage than on the men who desire to operate fee course plants on an intelligent business basis.

The smaller-town clubs are backbones of the social lives of their communities. They are definitely civic assets. Along comes some farmer with the idea that his pasture should be a golf course and by sticking in some holes, mowing the grass and putting up a sign that undersells the small-town country club, he gets by. The fact that he is able to operate because he does not pay his help enough to enable them to live, reflects on his value as a community benefactor, but the same criticism, unfortunately, must be applied to a number of private clubs in metropolitan districts, whose directors howl against paying living wages for seasonal work to men who have families to support in the community.

If we will sit down and figure the golf

business out on a basis of real sportsmanship in business rather than on the shortsighted and mercenary basis that we make the mistake of considering good business, many of the troubles of both private and fee courses will disappear.

Block Faucet Valves Open; Don't Remove Handles

DURING the winter it is necessary to open the valves on many outside water lines and leave them open to prevent bursting of either line or valve. Opening the valve and removing the handle and screw to prevent accidental or ignorant



closing of the valve is of course commonly done, but that is the way a good many handles and holding screws become lost and misplaced when badly needed later on. The photo shows a simple way to block a tap open, proof against everything but maliciousness.

Cut off one end of a spool so that the remainder will just slip in between the top of the packing nut and bottom of the handle when the valve is wide open. Whittle out the grooves in each half a bit if necessary to get them to hug the spindle of the valve and tie the halves of the spool in place with stout cord.

You cannot shut the valve, yet if necessary the guards can be quickly removed with most any kind of a handy tool, even a key, to break the cord.