

1935 LOOMS BIG!

Stage Is Set for Record Season at Nation's Courses

CREDIT it to the New Deal, normal business improvement, repeal, greater leisure, or what have you—but something has perked up the golf world these past ninety days so surprisingly that there's every indication 1935 will be rated as a banner year for the players, the clubs, and the manufacturers. Not only is a new spirit of confidence appearing in the various reports that filter into GOLFDOM's office direct from the various clubs, but manufacturers' salesmen who regularly call on these clubs, and therefore are in excellent position to gauge the outlook for the season ahead, report they are booking orders far in excess of this time a year ago.

The results of 1934 have had considerable to do with the existing optimism. Last season was a testing period for many clubs. They had managed to squirm through the worst years of the depression on a skeleton membership and in 1934 faced the necessity of improving the financial state of things, or else. This, as annual reports from the clubs indicate, was accomplished in great style by all but a very few clubs, and these undoubtedly were beyond the stage where improvement could be expected, so they quietly folded and disappeared from the scene.

Annual Statements Better

The rest of the nation's clubs recorded distinct improvement for 1934. During the year more memberships were sold than in several seasons past. A surprising

number of clubs began once again to boast of waiting lists, and with the increased memberships came several benefits—larger departmental business, more prompt collections, cash with which to pay for essential replacements to clubhouse and course, and a general pick-up in club spirit. As a result, the financial statements that have been sent GOLFDOM from clubs throughout the U. S. are almost uniformly improved when compared with statements from those same clubs for the season of 1933.

GOLFDOM does not mean to convey the impression that the nation's clubs have licked all their problems. This is far from the case. Fixed charges are still too high in many instances and something must be done to reduce bonded indebtedness through assessments on the members; this will go hard on the golfers concerned, but it is the only solution for those clubs short of a receivership, which none of them desire.

In addition to the problem of lowering indebtedness the clubs must prepare to make heavy investments in improvements, if they are to attract members and compete with other clubs. A fairway watering system seems to have become a necessity, at least for all layouts in the metropolitan areas. Clubhouses and contents, courses and equipment have been permitted to deteriorate these past few seasons, because the advisable repairs or replacements were not vital at the moment and the clubs very often preferred to go

along until there was a little more cash in the treasury.

Much Money to be Spent

This means that many thousands of dollars are going to be spent this season and next (just as soon as the clubs can possibly arrange matters) for clubhouse decorating, for replacements of worn furnishings and for improvements in facilities. It means that many thousands of dollars are soon to be invested in new course equipment to replace or augment present worn-out mowers, hose, sprinklers, tractors and other items that the greenkeeper must have if he is continue to operate efficiently. Courses need fertilizing and reseeding, and many labor hours spent in "manicuring" them back to the condition in which first class layouts were maintained in pre-depression days.

Better days lie ahead for the pro-shops, too. Like the clubs, the members have to a large extent "gone along" with what equipment they had. Thousands of sets of clubs are today badly out of date and will be replaced by their owners with modern implements in the near future, as conditions improve. Add to these sure sales for the pro the many sets of clubs that new members will be buying and you will see that the future is not dark for the pros.

All in all, GOLFDOM looks for a decided pick-up in the already improved condition of the golf industry. No one doubts that the stage is set, and it seems simply a case of conjecturing how rapidly the wave of confidence can gather the momentum to push golf onto the high platform of prosperity it deserves.

Optimism from All Sides

GOLFDOM is not alone in its feeling that the future is bright for golf. From all sides come similar reactions, in proof of which we quote from some recent letters:

From Herbert Jaques, president of the USGA:

"Since 1932, which was probably the point of low ebb, we have seen much forced reorganization of golf clubs which put them on a far sounder basis than they have ever been in the past. We have seen these jobs tackled in each club by a large group of members who have put their shoulders to the wheel because they realize that the club is a vital part of their

own pleasure and recreation. In the past year, we have seen a noticeable increase in the amount of golf played and in the use of clubhouse and course privileges.

"I look for a conservative but steady growth in the game for 1935 with a decided improvement reflected coincident with any business improvement, for which there are many reasonable indications. The golf business should benefit much along the same lines. There are always new and attractive features produced in the golf equipment field which find a ready market even in poor times, and I see no let-up in the determination of the American golf public to improve their games every opportunity possible.

"If the attitude of the public in making their Christmas purchases is any indication of what may be expected of the golf prospects for 1935 I am decidedly optimistic."

From E. E. Wippler, green-chairman, Bloomington (Minn.) GC:

"Bloomington is looking forward in 1935 to one of the best years it has ever enjoyed. We are planning to enlarge our clubhouse and to improve the golf course considerably. By way of taking advantage of the apparent prosperity, Bloomington has hired a manager who will be in complete charge of the course, as well as the membership campaign and tournament and play program for the season."

From E. E. Chapman, vice-pres. of the L. A. Young Golf Co., comes a cheerful note on the season ahead, and included in the note are some suggestions to club officials:

"During the past three or four years, pursuing a mirage was a picnic compared with trying to turn the proverbial corner in the golf business. However, from recent observation it would appear that this elusive corner might materialize during 1935. Everyone contacted is unusually optimistic. Advance orders are considerably larger than those of the previous year. Possibly the simplest way of expressing our faith in the coming season is by saying that we have been operating on a full capacity production program for the past month, and this will continue throughout the winter and summer months.

"So much progress has been made in golf club management and operation during the past few years, in spite of the depression, that it is difficult to offer

the club officials anything very tangible or new in ideas not already being employed quite generally. Just two come to mind at the present time.

"There is still a very noticeable shortage of suitable and properly located professional shops. It seems to have been the general practice in years gone by to allot the pro, for shop purposes, some particular space that could not possibly be used for any other purpose. As a result, too often the pro is so far removed from the usual route of the players to the first tee that his sales possibilities are terribly handicapped, and he cannot fully give his much needed services to the members. In the planning and building of more modern clubhouses, the location of professional shops has received as much consideration as the main dining room or lounge. Now that the clubs are beginning to make some profits from operations, particularly from the bar, it would be well to give thought to the proper location of the professional shop. This is worthy of consideration from the standpoint of re-employment alone.

"We believe there is another way of realizing the greatest benefit from the professional, and, at the same time, increasing his revenue. The clubs might include in their regular annual dues the price of, say, six lessons. This amount to be turned over to the pro as collected and the lessons arranged by appointment when, and as, convenient for the members.

"It is a foregone conclusion that knowledge of the game and ability to play it immeasurably increases a member's interest in golf. The only way this knowledge and ability can be acquired is by lessons and practice.

"In our humble opinion, many benefits would accrue from a program of this kind. Greater interest in the game, created by lessons, results in greater activity. Greater activity means larger income in all club departments.

"It would place a much larger number of clubs in position to engage the services of a competent and capable professional. It would assure the professional of a definite income or working capital. A definite minimum working capital for the professional might, in a large measure, eliminate some of the problems confronting the manufacturers."

From K. E. Goit, sales manager of Toro Mfg. Co., Minneapolis:

"We feel that conditions in the golf trade are due for steady improvement in 1935. Our view is that while improvement is bound to come, it is going to be spotty with some sections going

WHY DO THEY DO IT!

A GAIN golf clubs will repeat an annual mistake that is costly to each club—and costly, as well as rankly unfair, to their key employees.

Firing and hiring of pros, greenkeepers and managers in far too many cases is put off until the season is almost ready to open. The fellow who is canned may be the victim of club politics, its financial condition, his own unfitness or incompetence, but at any rate he ought to have a chance to get himself lined up in a new job before the last minute.

The club that delays engaging department heads usually has a tough time finding the man who exactly fits. In golf, as in every other business, good men are not easy to find. Very few of them are completely out of jobs and those, in a number of cases, are fellows who have some income or savings and would sooner keep looking until they get a real opportunity and a chance to do some effective work happily, rather than take anything that's open.

GOLFDOM has troubles of its own and does not invite a lot of employment agency work, but it has done a lot in putting clubs in touch with competent and satisfactory department heads and is perfectly willing to continue this function whenever we can be of service.

ahead faster than others. There is no question that amateur sports of all kinds are experiencing a marked revival, and golf of course, ranks at the top for mass play interest.

"Private membership golf clubs should investigate carefully new methods to attract and hold members. The day of high initiation fees and inflated dues is over. The Alderwood plan, originated by the Alderwood C&CC, Portland, is a step in the right direction, and the tremendous success of this plan is evidence that individual players want a new deal in club memberships. While it is a little too early yet to forecast the ultimate success or failure of the Alderwood plan, nevertheless it is worthy of consideration by all clubs and should find a prominent place in their discussion of 1935 plans.*

"Another event worth mentioning is the development of class instruction in golf by the newspapers, and much appreciation

* A full description of the Alderwood plan will be found elsewhere in this issue.—Ed.

is due the *Chicago Tribune* and other metropolitan papers who have taken it upon themselves to foster golf by offering free lessons to the public at large. We hope this idea will spread in the coming year and that more of the papers will get behind this worthwhile promotion.

"And last but not least, we hope that 1935 will bring greater rewards to the Superintendent of Grounds, who has never yet received complete recognition for his services to the great game of golf."

From L. B. Icely, president, Wilson-Western Sporting Goods Co., Chicago:

"The golf market will broaden, due to a number of factors, which I will outline further on. The best information we get from our sales group is to this effect: That they are writing advance orders about 25 to 30% greater on their fall trip this year as against last year, which means the professional is believing that he will have an increased demand for golf equipment and that his shelves are fairly clean of stock.

"The character of merchandise being bought is in the higher quality bracket, which indicates to us that the public is being sold away from the idea of buying price merchandise. They have been over-sold on that for the last three or four years. Since higher priced golf clubs are selling with us very much better for the coming year than in the past, we know that the unit of profit on each sale will be greater for the retail distributor. Therefore, the professional should have a better gross income the coming year than in the past.

"The outstanding tournament and promotional work that was done in golf in 1934 will be cumulative in value for the coming year. One striking evidence of national, as well as international additional interest in this great game is the sending by the PGA of a team of six men to Australia during the winter months. At the Miami-Biltmore Open just finished in Florida, they had one of the largest group of entrants of all types of professionals of any tournament held in that section.

"We believe that professionals, as well as manufacturers, are going to have—individually and collectively—a much better season in 1935 than they have had for the last four or five years. Undoubtedly, in our opinion, the demand for golf goods in the early season will be greater than ever

and that is why we have been emphasizing with the professional the placing of anticipation orders so that he will be prepared to give good service and greater additional sales with new merchandise when the golfing season opens. No manufacturer can give the kind of service the professional wants unless he has some idea—by the advance business—what the professional may need. There will be not only an increased and broadened market of new players, but a larger replacement market than ever before."

From Ed Canby II, vice-pres., Crawford, McGregor & Canby Co., Dayton:

"The disappointments and recurrent setbacks of the past few years have taught us all to be a great deal more conservative in our efforts to analyze and predict the course of future events. We have learned to base our expectations on a much more sane foundation. Guided by such an attitude, I feel, nevertheless, that the prospects for golf during the coming season are definitely encouraging.

"The game has suffered not one bit in interest during these trying years. There are just as many, if not more, adherents now as in 1928 and 1929. Circumstances alone have been responsible for the falling off in the amount of golf played. Its revival will parallel the improvement in general business conditions. I am convinced that golf will make tremendous strides in the next three years.

"The status of golf clubs generally seems to be measurably improved over the situation which existed a year ago. They are financially stronger, and membership lists have shown an increase. The way seems to be paved for a year of profit.

"A wholesome change in attitude is becoming apparent with respect to the primary functional purpose of the golf club. The period of unprecedented wealth and exaggerated emphasis of social affairs accompanying it, which existed during the 'twenties,' had a distracting effect upon the golf activities at most clubs. A golf club should, first of all, be for golf and golfers, and the many other affairs which clubs sponsor, while worthwhile, should not be allowed to detract or work a hardship on the strictly golf functions. I believe that club officials would do well to keep this in mind when arranging and conducting their club programs during the coming year. Their motto should be 'Keep the golf club for the golfers.'"