

# BACK TO GOLF

By GENE HAMPSON

Gene Hampson, sports editor of a New Jersey newspaper, reports in unbiased manner on a situation he has observed in his locality, but which also prevails in other parts of the country.

Repeatedly it has been pointed out that golf clubs for golf, on the order of the majority of British clubs, rather than golf clubs for general social activity, would have in the U. S. a broader membership appeal and less financial burden. However, since many clubs that depend on average memberships already have clubhouse facilities and investments that involve a financial strain on the majority of members, the problem obviously requires solution by resourceful and active house management.

Hampson points out to thoughtful club officials the necessity of restoring balance between course and clubhouse by giving competent managers leeway and incentive to increase house revenue without making the per-member expense a handicap to membership solicitation.

**A**FTER talking with golf club officials and listening to locker-room conversations, one gets the impression that golf at present is experiencing a "Back to the Golf Course" movement. Just what does this mean? It appears to be a general inclination to put more stress on the advantages of a well-conditioned and interesting golf course than on the delights of a beautiful cocktail bar, a spacious ballroom and an expensive dining-room.

There can be no doubt that during the pre-depression years, when money was plentiful and none thought too much of tomorrow, that social activities of a club meant as much to many members as did the nature of the golf course. Those clubs, staging interesting social entertainments, regardless of expense, were crowded with members; and a few clubs neglected their courses to meet the demand for more up-to-date clubhouse facilities.

Some clubs with more secure and stable memberships haven't felt or cared much about the gradual change that one senses in traveling about the East, but other clubs have not been so fortunate. Talking with officials, one notes that some clubs are cutting down the number of social affairs simply because their membership is showing less interest in them.

Other organizations keep their clubhouses operating profitably by renting the ballroom for special parties. Such events produce excellent revenue, but on the other hand there is reason to believe that these "outsider" parties may figure in keeping prospective members on the outside.

Fact that a club boasts a big clubhouse and goes in for the social end of the game has proved a drawback rather than a con-

tributing factor to memberships to some organizations. There are many of the younger golfers, now playing public courses, who feel that they can afford to join a golf club but that they couldn't afford to keep up their end socially.

If you do not believe this to be true, scout around some of your own public and municipal layouts and talk to the younger business men. Managers of these courses likely can point out a dozen men at each layout who would be worthwhile members if assured that participation in the golfing end would fulfill their duty to the club.

## Younger Men Must Hold Down Costs

It is pointed out that a member need not participate in social activities unless he desires, but it is hard to get this point across to a younger man. He feels that the opportunity to take part in parties and entertainments may prove too alluring once he becomes a member.

These younger men, once weaned from the fee course, usually find their way to a private club which offers a good course but where the clubhouse is not too large or doesn't figure too prominently in the general scheme of things. Such clubs appear to be prospering.

If you are a member of a country club where the members as a whole are not drawn from the higher income brackets, look around your locker-room and see how

## GREEN-CHAIRMEN

Invest in your greenkeeper. Pay his expenses to the annual NAGA convention at the Hotel Netherland Plaza, Cincinnati, Feb. 15-18.

He'll return better posted on the problems of course maintenance and better able to give your members for less money the sort of golf course they want.

many younger players you have whose dues are not paid or guaranteed by a father of some means. Your club may be doing all right, but such an investigation in many clubs will surprise you.

Don't get the idea that golf is going downhill or that all clubs are suffering. Golf is progressing and drawing more recruits day by day, but some clubs aren't getting their share of newcomers for some of the reasons advanced above.

Members of one Eastern club are still talking about a bombshell thrown into their midst by an active member. He suggested that the club would be far better off financially if they would tear down the clubhouse and would build a small grill and women's locker-room above the present men's headquarters.

He added that while he was a supporter of the club's social events because he felt it his duty, he would be satisfied with a much smaller clubhouse. There were those in the audience who echoed his statements.

One cannot help but feel proud of the manner in which American golf has grown and of the fine, beautiful clubhouses which have been erected on them. But, nevertheless, it is a shame to see some fine organizations teetering because the clubhouse has been allowed to outgrow the golf course.

### Pro Points to Need of More Mid-Week Golf Play

**JIM DANTE**, able pro at the Braidburn CC, Madison, N. J., tosses in a thought well worthy of serious consideration by pros who are planning a prosperous New Year for themselves and their clubs instead of just wishing. Dante's advice:

"A study of day-by-day play last season shows that in most cases whatever gains were made were due to increases in week-end play. Mid-week play did not show appreciable gains. The golf season is short enough without the pro permitting it to be confined to week-ends and holidays. If we have week-ends with bad weather we

are ruined and, needless to say, the club financial position is badly affected.

"Consequently, the wise pro will try to get together with the men and women officials of his club on a plan to encourage mid-week play. Minor prizes awarded even for scores on the first nine holes of week-day afternoons may be part of the answer. There will be those who will play 18, or even 27 holes an afternoon because of the attraction of such prizes.

"The mid-week business problem is one that concerns the club managers, too, so close co-operation between pros and managers on golf, luncheon, dinner and evening entertainment features is worth while.

"Unless pros collectively and individually pay serious attention to this matter we may find ourselves limited in our business to a season of 20-or-so weekends, instead of a six months' season, which in itself is all too short for making a profitable operation of a pro department at a golf club."

## NEWS FLASHES

Stockton, Calif.—Municipal golf course 1937 play approximately 25% more than 1936.

Miami, Fla.—Construction begun on 18-hole \$125,000 municipal course at Miami Shores. WPA grants \$67,000 to project.

Sturgis, Mich.—Klinger Lake CC clubhouse, replacing one burned last year, will be completed March 31.

Linton, Ind.—New \$30,000 munny golf course clubhouse expected to be ready for occupancy early in May.

Richmond, Va.—Farmington CC adding \$25,000 wing containing guest rooms and women's locker-rooms.

Ticonderoga, N. Y.—New clubhouse of Ticonderoga CC under construction.

High Point, N. C.—New Blair Park clubhouse formally opened.

West Orange, N. J.—Essex County CC governors approve plans for new \$200,000 brick clubhouse. Construction awaits approval of membership.