

Clubs All Set for Spring

This analysis is of club conditions in the New York metropolitan area, but applies equally to the other golfing centers of the U. S. Golf's future is bright

By H. B. Martin

GOLF club officials on the Eastern seaboard have been pretty much worried in the last year or so about golf club membership, but like most everything that the human mind finds to worry about, the fancied trouble doesn't always exist.

At the annual meetings of the Metropolitan Golf Assn. and the USGA the questions everybody asked each other were: "How has your membership held up?" and "What kind of a season are we going to have this year?" For the most part there was a general feeling of optimism. Everyone seemed to think that we had seen the worst and that the future held brighter prospects.

Picture Healthy Now

The enthusiasm is largely because there has been a wholesale cleaning out all up and down the line. Many members left golf clubs in recent years because they no longer were interested in the game, or country club life. It was a good thing for the game to get rid of these old fogies and make room for new material. The same thing applies to golf clubs. Some old clubs that have been hanging on the ragged edge for years have been compelled

to give up the ghost. It is just as well that this type of club does go out of existence.

Net Loss Is 12 Clubs

In 1931 was published a golf map of the Metropolitan District which contained the names of 312 established courses. Golf was at its peak then all over the country. These Metropolitan courses were all within the prescribed radius of 55 miles. The map was accurate. That was eight years ago—and much water has flown over the dam since then. We had fully expected our normal increase of eight courses a year, but we didn't get them. Golf went the other way and looking at the map the other day, I was surprised to note the many changes. There are only 300 courses now. Several new layouts have been built further out, but many have gone bankrupt. Other courses have changed their names and management; the mortality of clubs might have been even greater if real estate business had been better. However, the cleaning out process has now been completed, or nearly so. We are now on our way up again.

For years we kidded ourselves about the actual number of golf club members there

Roy S. Rutherford, Secretary of the Long Island Public Golf Course Owners Assn., announces that on several Long Island public courses cabins are being constructed to rent to New York World's Fair visitors at from \$1.00 to \$2.00 per person. As each club is erecting only enough cabins to handle advance reservations, golfers are urged to make reservations early. Rutherford will be glad to make the necessary arrangements through his offices at the Salisbury GC, Westbury, Long Island.

New York Fair publicity urges golfers to bring clubs while on vacation to the Fair, reminding that there will be innumerable opportunities for golfers to try their skill on some of the nation's famed courses.

were in the United States. When the big slump came, clubs began to lose their long waiting lists very quickly; then they soon began to lose members. The principle reason for this was because some golfers had the habit of joining several courses. It was not uncommon for a golfer to belong to three clubs and many belonged to half a dozen. One millionaire I know who had always been an enthusiastic player once belonged to 42 golf clubs—he just couldn't refuse to turn any of his friends down when they shoved a membership blank in front of him. This same chap belongs to three courses now and he only plays two or three times a year.

On Sounder Basis

Golf is changing rapidly in New York and vicinity. We learned a lot about golf from Chicago and most of the new courses put into operation have been municipal affairs or pay-as-you-play layouts. Our golf is cheaper than it used to be. That is why I say we are more solidly entrenched and nothing from now on is going to hurt us much. People here in the East are getting their money's worth out of the game, which is as it should be. The driving ranges are making new golfers every day and the public courses are taking on many recruits.

Yes, the boys are coming back to the game. More would come if properly encouraged. In the old days, when the head of the household went out for a quiet little game in early April, the good wife never saw him again until November. That is hardly the case today, but the men are returning to the links nevertheless, and they are taking their wives with them.

Golf clubs have been much at fault for the wholesale desertion in recent years. Golf clubs—at least some of them—were insecurely organized and were operated by

amateur control. All of which caused a lot of dissatisfaction, because a member didn't get his money's worth on the course or in the clubhouse. When money was plentiful, few cared and were glad to charge it up to profit and loss and let it go at that. It's different today.

One thoughtless little thing that has caused more resignations than anything else has been the way members have been dunned for their dues. It is very poor policy to annoy a member about golf club dues at Christmas time or when there are holiday bills to pay. With a foot of snow on the countryside no golf club member relishes getting a bill for his year's dues with a polite note to send in the money at once. Golf is furthest from his mind at this time and often he is in doubt about ever playing again. Resignations pour into the club around the first two months of the year and the secretaries wonder why.

The time to solicit a golfer is when the robin red breasts have put in an appearance and there is a touch of spring in the air. When days come with soft warm breezes and all humanity feels like getting out of doors, the morning mail that bears a letter from the golf club asking about one's plans for the summer is most likely to receive immediate attention.

Club dues that can be paid in two or more installments, or some plan for easy payments, will not frighten the old member—or a new prospect. At least, not in these days and times. Every member should be treated as a preferred creditor—or better still, a part owner, for that is what he really is. The boys will be flocking back into the old locker-rooms pretty soon, and they should be made to feel that they are more than welcome.

Midwest Amateur March 31-April 2.—Annual Midwest Amateur golf tournament at French Lick (Ind.) Springs hotel golf course, will be held March 31-April 1 and 2. Registration figures indicate the maximum entry list will be filled even before the special French Lick train leaves Chicago March 30. More than three-fourths of the tournament's entry list each year is from the Chicago district.

Largest single group registered for the golf party is the Elmhurst CC's team of 75 players. Many smaller parties from clubs of the Chicago district have already signed up. Jack Hoerner of North Shore CC, Glenview, took top individual honors in the 1938 event.