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## Golf Due to Grow in '41

By Herb Graffis

**Defense act is sure to spur golf nationally, but clubs will face several unusual operating problems, too.**

ELEMENTS having definite bearing on golf in 1941 now begin to indicate the game is due for a busy year.

Difference between the present situation and that of the previous period influenced by war seems to be mainly that golf's base is broader.

In 1916 there were 742 golf courses in the U. S. There were 1,161 more courses built in the next 5 years, bringing the U. S. total to 1,903. Not many of these courses were public. Most of the increase was direct result of munitions profit distribution among higher-salaried workers and officials who previously had considered golf principally a rich society game. Generally the labor sector splurged with spending for wide-striped silk shirts and patent leather shoes.

### More Public Play than Private

Now there is about 20% more rounds of golf played annually on public and fee courses than on private courses, although the private courses account for 3,288 of the nation's 5,209 courses. Availability of golf for working women also is beginning to figure in the pay-course picture.

Corporation employee recreation authorities have been boosting golf play

among their workers, although complaining that moderate-price arrangements encouraging employees to play the game are more than offset by slot machines and bars which make many employees visits to fee courses expensive.

Golf goes through the same thing at private clubs. More rounds of drinks are bought than rounds of golf played at U. S. golf clubs. Bar business at U. S. golf clubs averages—over the years since repeal—about \$9,000,000 per year more than golf ball, club and bag sales.

With a war-time situation taking form, foresighted club officials and managers are beginning to wonder what will happen to house business if hard liquor sales are curtailed by government edict. There's no denying that many golf clubhouse operations have drunk themselves into the black. After the prohibition experiment, the break for which forward-looking executives of golf clubs look, in case of hard liquor control, is an even bigger build-up

Works Projects Administration reports that during 5 years—July 1, 1935 to July 1, 1940—WPA did new construction of 2,373 golf holes on 15,340 acres; and reconstructed or improved 4,315 holes on 32,321 acres.

of beer volume and the domestic wines finally coming into their own at clubs.

Numerous club managers noted last year that beer volume increased despite shortage of days popularly considered most favorable for stein-histing.

Golf can't expect any more of a beating from the weatherman than it took in 1940. In most parts of the country it rained like Pago-Pago, then got hotter than east of Suez. Spring was slow and that didn't do pro-shop sales any good.

But golf has no kick when its attention is called to the suffering of minor league baseball which had more than 2,000 games—many of them week-end games—rained out in 1940 and wound up with attendance about 33% under 1939.

### Auguries of a Good '41

Right now promise for a great golf season seems to have substantial foundation in two current signs:

(1) Winter golf resort business is booming. Reservations at the majority of the winter resorts in all price classes are ahead of any other time.

(2) Resignations from private clubs are far fewer than normal. Representative clubs generally count on about 10% annual turn-over. This winter many clubs report resignations are surprisingly under usual figures.

Retention of the older members may be explained, partially, by broadened entertainment programs, both indoors and outdoors.

Another factor that analysts regard as figuring with increased strength in the golf situation is that of physical conditioning. Disturbing reports of Americans losing the ability to walk for any considerable length came out of the 1940 National Guard exercises. That warning, and doctors' emphasis on office and factory workers' recreation for physical and mental conditioning, has given golf a boost in making it a pleasant treatment as well as a social enterprise.

Greenkeepers and chairmen already are beginning to be seriously concerned about the course labor situation in 1941. Wages are being increased. Golf course maintenance has been handicapped by its seasonal nature. Course workmen usually laid off in the winter now are having but little difficulty in getting work for more money than they ever earned at golf clubs. Therefore spring will bring the problem of recruiting new men and training them in maintenance work that's a lot more ex-

acting in technique and experience than most golfers appreciate.

In most metropolitan districts and in many of the smaller cities greenkeepers already are reconciled to getting only their older men back. These men can't handle the strenuous manual jobs with speed or thoroughness. Consequently the machinery requirements of golf maintenance work are getting a foresighted survey by greenkeepers and club officials.

The condition points to extensive buying of maintenance equipment this spring and summer.

### Caddie Shortage?

Toward the latter part of last summer a caddie shortage made itself felt at many clubs. Boys of the low income families had replaced middle-class family sons as caddies since 1929. The 10 year slump in development of private golf club potential members had begun to be felt. Kids of the 1929-39 decade were in golf to help their families eat, rather than for spending money pleasantly earned in association with a game they were to support when they grew into adult earning class.

Now pros and club officials are reviewing the caddie recruiting and training methods followed back in the boom twenties when high schools and Boy Scout outfits were visited by shanghaiing squads from golf clubs.

Effects of the first draft have not hit golf clubs to any extent interfering with operation. However, most golf clubs have assured drafted employees that their jobs will be given back to them after they've done their draft hitch. Replacement employes have been hired with this understanding.

This handling of the draft situation has been particularly consoling to pros who have secured, built-up and retained jobs in a keen competitive situation. To the credit of the clubs that have announced this draft retention of job policy, they haven't bragged about it but have handled the matter strictly in stride as a decent, sporting thing. None of them, so far as we know, even has considered the legal phase of re-employment of draftees.

And wouldn't it be a hell of a thing for a draftee to go to court in an effort to get back on his job with an organization of sportsmen after doing his draft year? Then we would have the 1940 election's raps about the country club and station-wagon set dusted off and put into circulation again.