

# What Happened In Golf In 1917-18?

GOLFDOM presents recollections of pros, managers and greenkeepers active in golf during World War I, who point out policies that may be most useful during present crisis

## Pros Recall War-Time Golf

*Tom Boyd, Dyker Beach GC, Brooklyn, N. Y., recounts his 1917-18 experiences—*

**D**URING the earlier few months of the first World War, play fell off. But after the public was sold—and sold itself—on the idea that keeping fit was part of the job of winning the war, play was resumed on possibly a greater schedule than previously.

In those days there was very little play by shop and office workers, but the business executive class which was playing golf had heavy duties and had just as tough a time fitting needed recreation into their programs as men will have in this war.

I recall that no small part of the experienced pro's job in those days was in impressing many members that unless these men kept getting enough golf to keep themselves in good physical condition they would risk cracking under the war-time strain and be no good to the nation or to themselves.

That was a serious and well done selling job by pros who maintained close and sincerely interested watch over their members and saw men who neglected balanced living suffer physically, mentally and financially.

The majority of clubs at that time waived dues of members who were in the armed forces. Numerous clubs allowed service men to play the course free. That was less of a problem than it will be this year because of the far fewer number of golfers in 1917 and 1918.

Red Cross and other service benefits were played frequently at clubs. Admission fees and bidding for such clubs or balls as the players wanted to offer, and for the jobs of caddying for the players, raised considerable amounts.

The professionals then raised a large amount in exhibition matches. We had international teams. Jock Hutchison and Bob Macdonald were a Scotch team, Pat Doyle and I an Irish team, and there was a French team and various other teams of different nationalities. Pat and I played mid-week matches for the Sun Tobacco Fund which sent smokes to service men abroad.

Women at the golf clubs were exceptionally busy in war work. They were knitting, promoting every sort of a soldier, sailor, and marine, and war-time relief organization affair, and on just as busy schedules as their husbands.

This time it's my observation that the golf field has to do a quick and well-organized job of selling itself as a positive force in getting the nation fit for fighting on the battleline and in production and management jobs on the home front. This selling must be done to the people and to the government.

It is no time for quitters in the golf business. Golf businessmen who've got brains and guts and confidence in the American future will keep aggressive and resourceful in adjusting themselves to war-time conditions and in adding to the strength and spirit of the nation.

The showdown revealing who's strong and smart enough to deserve American freedom now is on in golf, as well as in all other phases of American social and business life.

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**F**RED Haas, pro at Metairie GC, New Orleans, and one of the nation's stand-out pro business authorities views the prospects of pro department policies and operations in war-time:

"First of all, I think professionals

should carry as large an inventory as they can finance because naturally there is going to be difficulty getting merchandise, and at the worst, prices will be more on the increase than on the decrease.

"Next, I think that every pro organization must eliminate the small leaks and become accustomed to operating on as small an overhead expense as possible. Third, I think pros should engage in a propaganda campaign calling the public's attention to the fact that a moderate plan of outdoor physical recreation is more necessary now than ever, and in this plan, of course, golf will automatically take its well-earned place.

"As for the effect which the war conditions will have on the golf business, this will largely depend upon the type of golfing plant at which the pro is engaged. The very exclusive private club will continue, although it will probably experience a reduction of play. The private club, which has as its members persons who earn between \$5,000 and \$15,000 a year, will find it much tougher going, because of the greater taxation which demands a curtailment of expense and, therefore, a certain amount of these members will do their golfing at semi-public or public courses where they are only subject to a fee each time that they play. In the course of this change no doubt some will be lost to the game of golf at least temporarily. The public fee courses and municipal courses ought to do a nice business and should get a lot of new players, both from the retrenching private club members as well as from workmen who have experienced a substantial increase in earnings under the existing conditions. Consequently, the only net loss which golf will experience is men in the army.

"My expressions are based on previous experiences to which I would add that conditions at this stage do not seem to promise as much profiteering out of war by a certain class as was the case during the last war.

"Immediate curtailment of expenses on part of the private clubs as well as private club pros seems to me both essential and unavoidable. On the other hand, I believe that practice fairways will have good business, and probably in some instances there may be a revival of the old putt-putt courses.

"From a standpoint of course maintenance, my recommendation would be to commence an immediate curtailment of expenditures so as to let the membership

become gradually used to a somewhat poorer condition of grooming. This of course necessitates a careful checking over of the existing standards, which each club may have and it must be borne in mind that such curtailment should not destroy fundamental conditions of soundness of existing grass growth.

"I am in favor of retrenchments, which I feel that if made immediately, will probably enable many clubs to live through the period of decreased income, which, in my opinion, is immediately in front of them.

"In order to maintain the good will of the people at large, I think that all golf tournaments should contribute a portion of their receipts to the Red Cross and other war-help organizations.

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George Sargent, pro at East Lake CC, Atlanta, Ga., and a former president of the PGA, advocates an offensive spirit by golf clubs to make clear their valid point that golf is the ideal all-age sport for relaxation and keeping fit. George writes:

"This is no time for golf to go on the defensive; but rather should take an aggressive attitude. If there ever was a time in the history of the United States when it is essential for one and all to keep themselves physically and mentally fit, it is from now on. If golf, as it has been played through the centuries, is what has been claimed for it—that of being a top notch physical exercise and an unsurpassed mental relaxor—and I venture to say there are few dissenters to that statement, then surely the time is here when it is needed as never before.

"Our golf courses are a going concern, ready and waiting to do their part in the tough times that may be ahead. The U. S. has a job to do that will require the best from all of us; but let's remember: we can work harder, better, and longer if we get a regular amount of play and relaxation. Our experience in the last war; and the experience of the British in both wars, teaches us that sports, of which golf played and is playing a splendid part, is a very distinct help in carrying the war burden."

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John R. Inglis, pres., Met. PGA section, and well known veteran pro at Fairview CC, Elmsford, N. Y., says:

"During 1917-18 golf did not deteriorate very much. The clubs, of course, operated with 10 to 12% less members, and the



Harry J. Fawcett, pres. CMAA, made a 5-week 6046-mile swing by car and train to Club Managers' Assn. chapters, and to clubs from Chicago to the West Coast, returning through the southwest. At Washington AC, Seattle, Mr. and Mrs. Fawcett were entertained by the Washington State Federation of Fraternal, Patriotic, City and Country Clubs. Left to Right: Mrs. Earl B. Hunt, Harry J. Fawcett, Mrs. Harry J. Fawcett, Earl B. Hunt, pres., Washington State Federation FPCC Clubs.

play was not very heavy. However, on Sundays and holidays the courses were well patronized, and only the week days showed a decline in the number of players. Women, especially, were very much interested in war work such as Red Cross, etc.

"Most clubs did not hold their usual club championships and large tournaments, but continued to keep their members interested by holding local club events throughout the playing season. The pro's business, because of these restrictions, was about 30% off. There was no shortage of clubs, balls or accessories. Many events and exhibitions were held for Red Cross benefit.

"We all know the game has made great strides and has many times the number

of players than in 1918. Consequently I feel that while many of our young men have been and will be called to the colors and while golf clubs will again be obliged to operate with smaller memberships, I do not anticipate there will be any drastic change. Most golfers play not only because they love the game, but because they realize that golf is the best exercise there is for one's health.

"Taxes will be much higher than during the last war, and many members will likely resign, but the majority of these will continue playing even if not at a private club. The Met section will do all it can to stimulate interest, and for the Red Cross and for defense. It is now planning one-day events for the new season."

## What Managers Say

John W. Ingleson, manager of Oakland Hills CC (Detroit district), where the 1924 and 1937 National Opens were held and where house, grounds and pro department operations mark the club as one of the country's foremost, comments:

"During World War I, I was managing the Manitoba Club (City Club) of Winnipeg, Canada. Canada at that time gave everything she had in men and materials to further the cause, and, in proportion to her population, had as many casualties as England herself in the war. I merely mention this because as I think back the high standard of service of this club was held throughout the four years the same as in peace time. White gloves and all

the niceties were in use for private parties. There was a scarcity of Irish linens and English china and we were unable to get the pure Costa Rica coffee which the club always used. Sugar, of course, was rationed but not so that it was noticeable. We did lose all the British servants within the draft age but at no time did we suffer in this connection.

"In the spring of 1918, I visited a number of high class city clubs in Chicago and was amazed to find some of the very best using cotton table cloths and compartment plates and the waiters were serving, on private luncheons, probably 15 to 20 people. It was then I realized that when the United States did something they