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## WHY NOT CONSOLIDATE?

Clubs too far from public transportation urged to unite with better-located layouts, to assure survival of both through war

By **HERB GRAFFIS**

**A**LTHOUGH the chronically optimistic and the intensely wishful are inclined to hope the gasoline and rubber situation will ease by late spring, in time to solve the problem of existence for golf clubs distant from public transportation, they might as well be told now there ain't no Santa Claus.

The winter book gives the clubs that are far off the public transportation routes not much better than a one in 30 chance of getting a supporting amount of play for the duration.

So . . . what to do?

The course may have a chance of getting by if it is converted to some other use during the war. Larger resorts, in numerous instances, already have been taken over for war purposes and others are scheduled to go. Golf blew one logical chance to convert more of its outlying plants to war convalescent hospital use, with rentals sufficient to handle carrying charges and then some, by not getting behind the idea proposed by Franklin H. Miller, set forth in detail in **GOLFDOM**. Only golf plants that were suitable for almost immediate conversion to war use have been selected by the government.

Lack of data and golf executive interest prevented the idea being furthered in a way to save money for the government, provide the convalescents with facilities highly favorable to their recovery, and to maintain the plants for restoration to 100% golfing use after the war.

Conversion to agricultural use or to pasturage isn't the right answer that many think. With serious shortage of farm labor now impelling sales of many farms, it doesn't make sense to think that addition of golf acreage to available and fitted farmland would be especially wise.

A picture of a herd grazing on the Augusta (Ga.) National golf course, widely used in newspapers, may have caused some to think that golf courses would be in keen and profitable demand as pasture but that idea would be stilled by talking to dairy or beef farmers about their troubles in getting help.

Courses that must be closed during the war, because of transportation difficulties, can be maintained on a basis that will enable quick restoration to use after victory. Minimum standards with almost completely mechanized maintenance can care for those situations. Maintenance is

essential if the course is to be used after the war. In one growing season, unattended, a first class golf course will grow beyond possibility of restoration except at considerable expense of money and time.

It is certain that whatever wise decision is to be made regarding the fate of a club during the war must be made on the basis of facts assembled and considered thoroughly, well in advance of the time when a decision is required. There's a general tendency to put off and hope for the best instead of building fences in case of adverse developments that necessitate a shutdown.

At this time it appears that consolidation for the duration is going to be the right answer for many private clubs. The most conveniently located club, of course, will have to be the nucleus of the consolidation. Right at the start a problem will arise because of the selfishness of a few of the best-located club's members who will not want to share their good fortune with others, even during war. They won't want to run the wartime risk of having their course crowded and may be very reluctant to incur the risk of having some persons not of their social standing as fellow members, even pro tem. It's a peculiar attitude to take while kids from the wrong side of the tracks are dying for them, but golf like almost everything else must contend with a small but powerful minority of boobs.

#### **Don't Ask a Premium**

There also may be an inclination to make the newcomers pay a premium for the convenient location of the club. This will not only retard consummation of the consolidation but get it started off on an impossible basis. The real need in the consolidation is a recognition of a mutuality of interest and the need of concessions by all elements concerned.

Notwithstanding the desire of members of clubs transferring their play to finance minimum maintenance of their home courses, the overall yearly cost of their golf club memberships probably will be reduced. With assurance of increased income from members of formerly competing clubs, the club that is the nucleus of the consolidation undoubtedly will be put in better condition to go through the war supplying valuable community wartime recreation.

The delicacy of beginning consolidation conferences is regarded as more of a problem than it actually is. Businessmen mem-

bers of the club involved know that this is a time to be practical and fair and not to take undue advantage of a trading factor in location, prestige, character of course, etc. One of the vital requirements of this war effort is unity and if unity can't be attained between golf club memberships, somebody has muffed one of the lessons that must be learned to win the war.

Consolidation negotiations that have come to GOLFDOM's attention seem to be proceeding on a factual basis more solid than a lot of golf club operations in the past. Maps showing members' residence and public transportation routes, analyses of club financial statements and departmental operations, budgets of probable expected income and operating costs, and other data giving the probable picture of the consolidation have been prepared by club officials for eventual consideration by the combined membership.

#### **Expect a Few Troubles**

Some inconveniences cannot be escaped in these consolidations. The main one contemplated by those considering consolidation for the duration is that of lockers. It does call for personal readjustments, but in view of the sacrifices demanded by this kind of a war it would be a rather weak and unessential sort of an American who would complain bitterly about sharing his locker as a contribution to war effort.

Because of the plans of clubs to maintain their courses while out of play, pending return to operation after the war, there is not contemplated any switch of greenkeeper employment. In fact, several clubs have in mind using quite large areas on the out-of-play courses for vegetable production. Such plans are being prepared by greenkeepers who are scheming to utilize whatever labor they can get, and their club's equipment, to the utmost.

What will happen to the pros of the clubs abandoned for the duration is uncertain. Members of some clubs have war jobs for the pros and have given the pros help in getting winter training for these jobs instead of being turned loose on short notice without being qualified for war work. Others are considering expansion of pro staffs to give instruction a big boom, expecting that many of the members will not have time for 18-hole rounds except on Sundays and perhaps an occasional other day in the week but can make good use of instruction and supervised practice for exercise and escape and as

part of a feature of whatever twilight golf those members may be able to get.

Back of the consolidation negotiations and deals is the conviction that golf is going to be highly important this year to the class of men who constitute the private club membership. The great increase in employee absenteeism has forced attention to the wartime value of recreation plans that keep the employee in physical shape to work and in mental eagerness to keep at the tasks which frequently are monotonous.

However, the executives and engineering staffs generally are not considered in the employees' recreation planning. These men have had heavy responsibilities and long hour work for more than a year. Their intensity, without change of pace, is beginning to show in the quality and quantity of their work. Unless they begin to take care of themselves with the kind of reconditioning golf can supply, they'll crack under the strain.

Some of them already are so lagging in spirit and strength required for their own good that it'll be tough enough to get them to go to some inconvenience to

get the golf they need. Probably, in some cases, the novelty of the proposed consolidations may be a factor in getting them out to the courses.

Admittedly the consolidation proposition has many problems to solve, but to the sort of brains demanded in winning the war the problems shouldn't be too stiff. And there is a fair chance that these golf club consolidations may work out like a similar situation has worked out in the medical field. The doctors who aren't in the service have all the patients they can handle. That will probably be what happens to the golf clubs that are left.

So far, no information regarding daily fee course combinations—to allow survival of outlying courses—has come to GOLFDOM's notice. Because these establishments are privately owned enterprises, there probably won't be any mutual planning to preserve the outlying establishments, although there are cases where co-ordinated working arrangements might be mutually helpful to course owners and a considerable service to the public that counts on golf to keep itself in best condition for the war effort.

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## USGA Re-Affirms Golf's All-Out for War

By JACK FULTON

THE United States Golf Association at this, its annual meeting, believing that sportsmanship is implicit in the name of golf and that there is also implicit in sportsmanship those qualities which best serve our country in both peace and war, hereby dedicates all it may possess in influence, in organization and in facilities to whatever service or sacrifice may best serve the cause of the United Nations."

This resolution, adopted by the USGA at its annual meeting in New York City, Jan. 9, and conveyed to President Roosevelt, paints in a few words the course the USGA will take in the year ahead—and hence the attitude of golf generally this coming season.

In more detail, as outlined by re-elected

President George W. Blossom, the USGA for 1943 will cancel its traditional championships, will interest itself only in such tournaments as are patterned to the war effort, and will continue to urge its member clubs to contribute the greatest possible service to the nation. This policy is strictly along the lines laid down at the 1942 USGA meeting a year ago, when golf was the first sport to recognize the need for alignment to the war effort

Late in 1942, in an endeavor to measure golf's service during the past year, the USGA sent questionnaires to the country's 5,200 golf courses; 1,296 organizations returned the questionnaires. Of these, 698 clubs and courses gave complete replies and from the data supplied (which should be regarded as indicative of golf's service