

SEPTEMBER, 1943

## CLUBS IN RECORD ACTIVITY AS WAR STRAIN CONTINUES

By HERB GRAFFIS

OFFICIALS of many golf clubs have been amazed by the amount of golf play and clubhouse patronage this season. During latter days of the 1942 season numerous clubs doubted that they would open this year. The uncertainty accounted for numerous employees not returning to their clubs last spring. The point system was expected to sharply restrict clubhouse business. The prevailing attitude toward golf, which continued to suffer the rap of being regarded as a rich man's game, was regarded as something golf couldn't overcome while rich and poor alike were in combat service.

Possibly the factor that enabled golf to surmount the obstacles was the sheer stubbornness of golfers. The American works most effectively when things are toughest against him. Pearl Harbor was the No. 1 example of that.

What nobody seems to have taken into consideration is that golf is the recreation and refresher best suited to the highly mechanized civilization war brings into operation. Americans work hard. They must play hard to maintain balance. The golf club this year has taken the place of more distant places of necessary rest for industrial and business brain and manual workers. It has supplied a family recreation spot for those families whose mothers are intensely engaged in war

work and whose younger children haven't the prewar attention of nurses.

How desperately the golf club is needed is evident from the remarks of a prominent physician member of an eastern golf club. After comparing notes with other physician members of the club the doctor expressed belief that 52 of the club's 280 members had hearts in poor condition because of wartime strains and living and working conditions. The doctor further commented that had it not been for the use of the club as a place to let down and revive there'd be enough of the club's war-working industrialists dead or in hospitals to constitute casualties equivalent in numbers and importance to severe action in a combat zone.

Russell G. Miller, manager of the Evanston GC (Chicago district) comes forth with another explanation of the unexpected activity at golf clubs this summer. Miller formerly was a recreational director at Utica, N. Y. He points out that the urgent necessity of recreation is not confined to any one class of workers. That the private golf club happens to be a wartime recreational center for men in the heavier tax brackets is no reason why this class of citizen should be any less reluctant to use the club than the manual laboring man should be backward about using public parks for wartime recreation.

Such is Miller's judgment and he's had executive experience with people in all economic brackets.

Miller cites the case of a man coming to his club, ordering a drink, and while the drink was being prepared, lying down on a locker-room bench to rest. Miller happened to be in the locker-room and saw the member stretched out. He asked the member if he felt O. K.

"No, lousy," the member replied. "We just got word from Washington to change one of our products in a way that'll retard its successful operation in the field. I have to go to Washington tonight and I've been all morning at the office trying to figure out the answer in the middle of a million interruptions. I came out here to get a chance to get straightened out. I now think I see my way clear."

"Hundreds of similar cases have been observed by golf club managers," Miller remarked. "But the unknowing might sharply criticize the member as a fellow who came out to the golf club to loaf and drink. As a matter of fact the strongest objection against a golf club today might be that it is used too much as an extension of a fellow's office instead of providing him a divorce and recovery from his office."

Generally the American private golf club situation in the second summer of the war appears to Miller as follows:

"Wartime restrictions on travel have been a boon to many clubs and a death knell to others.

#### **Near Clubs Are Lucky**

"Close-in clubs have increased their memberships at the expense of the outlying clubs. Business has boomed to proportions the most optimistic would scarcely have dared prophesy in the fall of 1942. Lest the critic, who has not been a member of a club during these wartime restrictions, feels that those folks who have been enjoying their clubs have been unpatriotic, it is worth mentioning at this time, that the increased patronage of the clubs has been due to the war workers who have found the physical and mental relaxation not only beneficial but essential to their fitness in carrying on a most strenuous program of war work whether it be as employer or employee.

"In the spirit of the times, club members have accepted essential war effort restrictions in a most gracious manner. Patience and tolerance have been exhibited, not in a condescending manner but

with all the culture and breeding that has distinguished refined and patriotic loyal Americans. Most of those members have sons and daughters in service. The mothers are working hard, not at a wartime wage scale, but at a routine schedule of hours as rigid as the most exacting factory schedule, and without pay. Surely they deserve the orchid when we pass out bouquets. The Red Cross, Nurses Aids, Blood Banks and the many more behind-the-scenes branches of service can attest to their unstinting devotion and unselfish service. These are the folk who come to their clubs for relaxation when they can break away from their arduous duties.

"The doorman is out and the members park their own cars, thus saving one more man.

"Service on Mondays is out, for the club is closed. This gets every one off at one time and saves the swing man who relieved the help on their days off.

#### **Three Meatless Days**

"Steaks are off the menu. Meat is served only on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays—four days a week.

"The dining room with a very restricted menu is open from noon to 3:00 P. M. and from 6:00 P. M. to 8:30 P. M., and this in turn saves many more employees.

"Fortunate is the club that has been staffed by a crew of employees over 45 years of age, whose service covers several years, for these employees have done double duty in carrying on the service which might have been seriously impaired by shortage of labor and by the rapid turnover among the newly acquired 1943 help.

"Clubs are here to stay for the duration as an essential part of this war industrial program as a builder-upper for the executive and for his employee. You can not run an army without a physical setting-up program and you need the same sort of a program for the boys behind the boys behind the gun."

Army and Navy memberships have helped many a golf club to have record years. Harbin K. Park, telling of the Columbus (Ga.) CC year, reports that the club took in 75 Army officer members at \$4.44 a month dues (civilian monthly dues \$7.77). Because of these additional members and the club's close-to-town location there has been more activity at the club

than ever before. A lot of equipment trouble has been experienced at the club, but "I suppose that is general", Mr. Park comments. Equipment trouble has been widespread due to necessity of employing inexperienced and careless help.

Probably the most significant indication of a healthy condition in wartime golf is the extent of organized activities and abundance of suggestions for expanding the clubs' services within wartime limitations.

Club tournaments, we've noticed, have had much higher scores than in previous years, reflecting the absence of younger players now in the armed services and the inability of older players to devote time to practice. However, the weary, patient duffers who previously haven't had much luck even in the Saturday sweepstakes now are getting into the prize lists and giving their wartime morale a completely unexpected lift.

Such events as the member-pro tournament staged by the Knollwood CC (New York met district) bring a refreshing relief of "the good old days" to a club's members and provide a recreation feature that pulls the members out of the monotony of their war work and worries.

### No Defeatism Here

A bright example of how the well-run clubs are not giving up and adopting a defeatist attitude during the war comes in Fairways, publication of the Virginia CC, Long Beach, Calif. Fairways prints eight proposals for further pepping-up of interest at this already lively club, presenting the proposals under the heading:

"WE SUGGEST—

OR, How about making a few changes in the old hum-drum curricula?"

Interesting evidence of how continuance of the golf club's activities makes good news for members and their sons and daughters far away from home is frequent in the club publications. One of the sprightliest of the smaller-town clubs, the Belmont Hills CC, St. Clairsville, O., in its News notes that copies of the publication are sent to members in Africa, Sicily, Iran and England.

Golf club departmental operation never has had the numerous and complex problems that this year has brought, but generally the operations have been of amazingly high standard. Pros have conducted more interesting club programs and have



Some of the pros in service who competed in the Victory Open at Beverly (Chicago distr.) are shown here flanking Lt. Col. Jim Wilson. On the left, Jim McHugh and Chick Harbert of the Army; on the right, Jimmy Thomson of the Coast Guard and Lawson Little of the Navy.

had more lessons than they expected. Managers and greenkeepers have had constant problems with help, not the least of which, in the case of managers, has been the problem of transporting waitresses. High school student help was extensively employed during the summer and although it required much supervision and caused increased breakage and repairs, it did help keep things going. The amount of money earned by the kids in some clubhouse jobs was so high it sometimes didn't set very well with older employees.

The golfing public got reconciled to the caddie situation. The Kaddie Karts and double caddying extended the boy supply as far as possible, and when boys weren't available players carried their own bags. The canvas bag came back into popularity. There was phenomenal response to advertising of the Balanced golf bag, a canvas carrier of light weight, and designed so it doesn't dump the clubs as do the customary type of canvas bag.

Many club officials, managers, greenkeepers and pros are studying the 1942 season's lessons of streamlined management to see just what the emergency has taught in revising golf club operating policies in the postwar period.

An interesting sidelight to the golf situation is the badly worn physical condition of managers and greenkeepers whose labors to provide recreation for others haven't allowed attention to their own health. Quite a few greenkeepers at smaller clubs have been in war factories and have handled course maintenance as an extra job.

The surprising success of the golf season has stirred early investigation into

the possibilities of winter sports programs at the close-in clubs. That means more work and worry for the managers, but they're not distressed at the prospect as long as whatever may be done will contribute to the fitness of the American in wartime.

There's still a critical period of ration point stretching that must be met by managers before the big headaches of clubhouse operation have been suffered for this year. Golf club Victory gardens and poultry houses helped to solve the rationing problem at many clubs.

### Camps Help Club Health

St. Louis, traditionally a city conservative in many matters but not in its friendliness and hospitality, thought that 1943 would be a year of skeletonized golf. By war industry and many Army Air Force establishments near the city St. Louisans were constantly reminded of the necessity of high-tension war effort.

But the way this season developed at the excellent private clubs of the district is indicated by A. A. Taylor, pres., Algonquin GC. Mr. Taylor advises GOLFDOM:

"Some of the Board members, in fact, probably most of them, had many fears as to the outcome of golf for the year 1943, due to the many contributing factors that had, or would have influence—transportation, golf supplies, labor, machinery and equipment as well as fertilizer for golf links were, in the early spring, quite uncertain.

"But the outcome has been that the Algonquin club has done better than most of us expected. Patronage is holding up better than expected. Membership is full—with waiting list. We are much better off than most of us expected to be in the early part of the year.

"Inasmuch as our club is served by two street car lines and a railroad, with suburban service, our transportation problems have not been very serious, and it is our plan to continue operations as nearly normal as possible for year 1944. At this time there is apparently no reason why we cannot do so."

In the New York metropolitan area clubs easy of access by public transportation have had almost phenomenal wartime patronage. Undoubtedly these clubs benefited at the expense of clubs not so conveniently located.

G. U. Burdett, pres., Knickerbocker CC, comments on situation at his club: "The

success that the Knickerbocker CC has had since Pearl Harbor is most gratifying and has been quite surprising to me.

"Last year was one of the best years the club has enjoyed in some time. We increased our membership; the use of the club was more than normal. This year we have again increased our membership with also, of course, increased use of the club.

"We are fortunate in having a bus line which runs from the New York side of the George Washington bridge directly past the club gate, and buses operate on a half-hour schedule. This not only enables New York people to reach the club but as the buses go through the center of Englewood, it has permitted those of us who live in Englewood to get to the club without using a car.

"The restaurant last year and this year has been doing the largest business we have done in a long while, and Thursday night has become a meeting place where people go because they will find many of their friends there."

In the active smaller cities, golf club interest has experienced a revival. The clubs supply something that is needed to maintain lively morale of the members. Operating problems have been numerous but they've generally been handled by emergency action that not only has been satisfactory for the time being but has pointed out operating improvements that probably would not have been adopted under normal circumstances.

F. C. Fischer, pres., Evansville (Ind.) CC, tells of the interesting developments at this wisely conducted club:

"On January 1st of this year, which was just about two or three weeks after gasoline rationing first went into effect, I was quite dubious concerning the future outlook of our club and I anticipated wholesale resignations, particularly when the increased Federal income taxes would be felt by the membership. In fact, I discussed the practicability of closing nine holes of our 18 hole course in order to minimize expenses.

"To my surprise our only resignations consisted of members who were compelled to leave the city and we had so many new applications for membership during the early summer that we were compelled to close our membership, for the first time in the club history, and establish a waiting list.

"Our club is in the fortunate position of  
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being less than five miles from the heart of the city and in addition, many members live in the suburban areas beyond the club which make the club facilities very accessible to them. Then too, most of our large war plants are located closer to our club than to the downtown areas which makes it very convenient for the officials of these industries to use the club's facilities at meal time or for brief relaxation periods.

"Another feature inaugurated at our club this year is the Sunday night buffet which has proven very popular because of food rationing and the desire of many individuals to occasionally eat out to conserve points for home use. These buffets require a minimum of help since each member carries his own tray as he selects the food he wants from the steam table, the salad table, and the dessert table. It is not unusual for our club, with an approximate active membership of 300, to have 225 reservations for these Sunday night buffets.

"We waive all dues of any member entering the armed services and if he is married, permit his wife and children to enjoy the full facilities of the club. We also have a military membership for any service men stationed in our city which enables them to join the club by making a nominal deposit to be held during the life of their membership and then returned to them in full when they are transferred, providing they have no indebtedness to the club.

"Our golf pro and superintendent are having trouble in maintaining a sufficient personnel to take care of the course but on days when there are a minimum of club players, the caddies are given an opportunity to help work on the course. This not only helps to solve the manpower shortage on our course but it gives the caddies a chance to earn some money.

"While I know that each country club has its own problems and we are very fortunate in our location, I do believe that, in view of the vacation denial of many people this year and the necessity for relaxation from strenuous war work, any club in the Central West that is readily accessible, should be able to continue a successful operation with a little promotion and ingenuity."

September, 1943



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## TIMELY TURF TIPS

Right now clubs should forget fairway fertilization. Milorganite fed courses will not fare too badly without being fertilized for a year or two. After the war, or when fertilizer is more plentiful, fairways can be restored quickly—with Milorganite alone—or by using Milarsenite first to curb weeds and clover.

Greens and tees should not be neglected. They should get enough fertilizer to ward off disease and maintain dense turf. We expect to furnish Milorganite in limited quantity for this purpose and hope before long chemical nitrogen will become available again for use on these vitally important areas.

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