

Northern California Golf "Better Than Expected"

By EDDIE EDWARDS

San Francisco Chronicle

A CHECK-UP on the golf situation in Northern California has revealed some interesting and encouraging facts. The game, both at private clubs and on public courses is in a quite healthy state, even better than might be expected under existing conditions.

The Northern California Golf Assn. lists 68 member clubs as 'active' and while several smaller clubs in the less populous districts have been forced to suspend operations this year, on the other hand three have reopened following reorganization. In addition, two others which shut down are open again but now on a pay-as-you-play basis and not affiliated with the association at present.

Oak Knoll became a naval hospital many months ago and Del Monte was closed with the establishing of a Pre-Flight school there. Two clubs, one an exclusive organization of the peninsula, reduced its course to nine holes, because of the upkeep problem due to the manpower shortage. In the case of the exclusive club, its action resulted in a heavy loss of members by transfer to neighboring clubs.

Generally speaking, the play at the private clubs in 1943 was about even with that for 1942. Some of the larger clubs report a slight increase, some a slight decrease, but the change would be less than ten percent either way. This, of course, takes into consideration daily, week-end and holiday play. Saturday and Sunday play remains about the same at the more prominent clubs.

The Olympic Club at Lakeside operating under circumstances differing from those existing at other clubs, reports a small drop in play by the golfing membership but, at the same time, an increase in play by members of the downtown club, who hold golfing privileges.

Sequoyah, in Oakland, reports a sharp decline in play, due to a gas rationing 'scare' early in the year but a steady increase since and that despite an increase in dues and green fee.

Play at the municipal courses in the San Francisco metropolitan area shows a slight drop, again speaking generally, but in the case of two cities, revenue is about the same or greater. San Francisco's Park Commission, for instance, reports that play at the two courses close in (Harding and Lincoln Parks) matches 1942 figures for Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays and off no more than five percent on weekdays. At the city-owned Sharp Park course 15 miles down the coast, week-end play has dropped five percent but by 50 percent through the week-days.

Green fees, however, are up about 25 percent and the monthly revenue has jumped approximately \$900, as compared with an estimated monthly increase of \$850 necessary to break even on operation costs.

Oakland's munny course (Chabot) and situated ten miles out reports a drop of 20 percent and anticipates a further decrease in ratio to any additional gas rationing slashes. But Chabot's loss has benefitted neighboring Berkeley's Tilden Park, the play shifting to that course, which is closer at hand for the players. Alameda's munny course, one of the busiest, reports that 1,908 fewer players turned out during the 1942-43 fiscal year but with a ten percent boost in green fees, the revenue drop was only \$55.

Wherever play has dropped, the sole reason has been gas rationing, but the golfers, themselves, through whole-hearted co-operation on share-the-rides arrangements at almost every course may take full credit for golf's existing state of well-being.

Women's golf has slumped, definitely, though I can give no figures. Most of the ladies are engaged in war work or relief activities in one form or another and only at Lakeside has their golf play remained on even keel. In several isolated cases, women's golf at private clubs has been discontinued.

As to golf for service men, arrange-

ments vary with each club. At several of the private clubs here, the plan has been to grant use of the course to the first 12 service men turning up each day and unless the course is crowded, others may play without charge. Presidio Club, with a large membership of the military, has an open day each week. Across the bay, at Orinda, the membership includes some 75 men stationed at the Pre-Flight school, dues being half-rate and green fees waived. Sequoyah reports about 30 officers from Oak Knoll playing regularly.

At the San Francisco public courses, the practice has been to waive green fees for a dozen service men daily, scarcely a generous provision. A monthly tournament for service men, to be rotated on the three city-owned links was inaugurated in October by the AWVS and gives promise of developing into something worth-while.

The condition of golf courses around here may be classified as excellent, as good as 1942 and in a few cases even better though there has been little rain and the shortage of course labor is acute.

Tournaments have been suspended in a few instances, particularly women's events. Others have been reduced, both in length and time. For example, the state amateur was streamlined to five days, the qualifying round cut to 18 holes. The pros have been hit, too, for many are without assistants and press of business precludes much, if any tournament activity. About 30 percent of the Northern

California pros are employed on a full time basis. Most of the others are engaged in war work, for economic and patriotic reasons.

Golfers have given considerable time to Victory Gardens and while some clubs lack ground for elaborate layouts, one (California) has leased out and supplies water for 35 acres, all planted with vegetables. Lakeside has a three acre garden while at clubs in the East Bay, smaller gardens are producing.

The financial condition of most of the bay region's private clubs ranges from good to excellent. Membership lists are growing at those most prominent and it is the general belief of club and association leaders that the clubs have weathered their most trying times; those now operating will be even stronger after the war.

The golfers look to the future with optimism and while the threat of more drastic gas rationing hangs over the West Coast, it is also the opinion here that the game will suffer only in the event of some serious military reverse.

By and large, the players at private and public courses have been conserving at least enough of that allotment of gas permitted for pleasure driving to take them to and from their clubs. With the share-the-ride plan in general operation, there's no reason to believe the golfer within reasonable distance of a course will miss out on his recreation, even if given less gas.

Yanks in India Asked \$6.04 Per Golf Ball

PFC. JOSEPH D. ORCHARD, special service councilman of American air depot group in India, wrote the Wilson Sporting Goods Co. a close-up on the golf situation with Yank Army air forces. Said Orchard:

"Golfers in the American Army Air Forces stationed in India find it almost impossible to obtain golf balls. A few new balls are available in the near-by city at an exorbitant price of Rupees 20 (\$6.04) each. Reclaimed balls, sold by merchants here in India for Rupees 8 (\$2.40) each are in worse condition than those which were being sold by caddies before the war.

"Therefore, we are appealing to you directly to help make it possible for us to continue to enjoy this grand old American sport.

"Our golf club considers this strictly a business proposition and will pay for all balls you can send us (preferably re-processed balls).

"Attached you will find a score card of our course. With the help of Indian coolie labor we constructed this course in our spare time in four months. The layout may be quite different from the championship courses in the States, but we enjoy the course as though we were playing on Merion Cricket Club."

L. A. Young Spring and Wire Corp., parent corporation of the L. A. Young Golf Co., has issued a book describing war production jobs being done in its 11 plants. It's a highly interesting and impressive outline of tremendous achievements in a wide scope of war materiel manufacture.