

# Beware Earlier Mistakes In Postwar Club Planning

By HERB GRAFFIS

THERE HAS BEEN considerable buying of golf clubs, in eastern metropolitan districts especially, during the past two years. Clubs that have been bought generally are enterprises that have been in financial difficulties for years. Between the taxes and the mortgage principle and interest payments they've had a load that kept away new members.

Despite gas rationing some of these courses have been able to do fairly well on a daily fee basis with wartime wages boosting play. But as fee courses the establishments of course haven't operated nearly at the private club standard originally intended.

There are no dependable estimates on how much the passing of those struggling private clubs has figured in making waiting lists for the private clubs that are better located and in better financial condition. But it is a sure thing that the change in status of the weaker private clubs to a daily fee has been a factor in concentrating private club memberships.

Now it begins to be reasonably certain that a building boom will follow V-J Day. Economists are expecting residential building to provide the business push that railroad building supplied after the Civil War and the automobile, road and radio building supplied after World War I. And what would be more natural than that the landscaped, scenic spots of former country clubs be chosen as suburban residential sites?

As a matter of fact the cause of a lot of the pre-war trouble of country clubs was in their becoming centers of suburban building booms. Property prices and taxes increased. The tax bill increase hadn't been contemplated in club financing. What should have gone for mortgage payments had to go to the tax collectors to pay a bill resulting from the mere presence of a country club on what had been farm property.

Already planning of postwar golf clubs is in an active stage. Costly mistakes of the club building boom after World War I will be repeated in many instances. The men who made those earlier mistakes in their trail-blazing are not officials of the proposed new enterprises. Unless the planning committees get golf architects who know those basic mistakes that were made in the 1920s, and are willing to heed the architects' advice the new clubs will start unnecessarily far behind the 8-ball.

Private clubs won't be the only ones to make the mistakes. Businessmen will build fee courses on land that costs too much to ever permit a profit with accurate bookkeeping and much competition from other courses in the vicinity.

There undoubtedly will be many more players in the market. But the capacity of a golf course is limited. A foursome every five minutes is considered about the safe capacity load of a course. With a high percent of new players the traffic is slower. Correct design of the course can facilitate handling the traffic.

However, the capacity of the course strictly limits the play that can be handled even during the week-end and holiday periods. I have gone over the figures of fee courses that have been in financial difficulties and have found several times that the courses, even if carrying capacity six hours a day, 125 days a season, could not bring in carrying and operating charges.

It is to be expected that banks and insurance companies after their experience with overly optimistic financing of golf clubs in the years following World War I won't be as easy as they used to be in participating in golf club financing. The new clubs that intend to go far out and buy acreage will be warned against current inflated prices.

Just how sharp this war's restriction

of automobile travel will be as a reminder in the selection of new club sites is anybody's guess. Probably in a few years after V-J Day travel by small planes will become so popular that the resort clubs will get a heavier play and be of higher standards of architecture and maintenance. But, the way golf-wise people are thinking now the course fairly remote from crowded residential districts will be 9 holes rather than 18, and will have attractive, but small and elastic clubhouse facilities.

The boom in metropolitan clubhouse business during the war, caused by domestic help shortage, hasn't fooled the foresighted managers any. They can't see the investment soundness of a big and expensive clubhouse unless the club is in a position to attract and handle a steady load of business of the restaurant or hotel type.

The uncertain house business before the war and the difficulties of help and rationing during the war have painfully impressed on club managers the fact that most private country club clubhouses today are for show rather than for efficient operation. But the complaints and costs come from inability to efficiently operate the showplace.

In very few instances have competent managers been asked to give their judg-

ment and advice to clubhouse planning. Chances are that condition won't be improved in the clubhouse building after this war. New clubs that haven't selected their managers won't think of paying several settled competent managers to go over clubhouse plans. The fees involved probably would be saved in operating economies in a season or so, but in the rush to get the buildings erected and furnished the obvious practical method of avoiding mistakes will not be employed.

It has been surprising to many that golf clubs have done so well during the war. It was expected early in 1942, that play would fall off sharply. Later it was thought that high taxes would reduce private country club membership to a minimum. However, the wartime operation of numerous golf clubs has brought them into better financial condition than they'd ever been before.

That wartime showing may tempt the unwary comparative newcomers to plan big golf clubs for after the war. There were plenty of them built after World War I; clubs that cost each member \$100 or more a season before the doors opened, simply on fixed charges and inevitable operating losses. Smaller, smarter and thriftier clubs are necessary to nurse along the vast expansion of the game that seems probable after Japan is defeated.

## Bob Jones Views Golf's Postwar Prospects

★ AMIDST TALK of a post-war plastic golf ball which might have greater distance than the good old standard ball, Bob Jones opines that a longer-ranged ball will only be like a dog chasing his tail. When interviewed by O. B. Keeler for an article in July Esquire, Jones pointed out that as the ball gets longer, the courses get longer, and that requires more acreage and upkeep and results in layouts uncomfortably and unfairly long for the average golfer and the feminine golfer and the duffer who pay more than 90 per cent of the freight in club golf and public-course golf.

There won't be many fundamental changes in golf equipment after the war, according to Jones. The steel shaft, so accurately standardized as to eliminate the formerly variable factors of whip and torsion, seems to have taken care of everything except what might be termed the refinements of club design. Jones says the average golfer wants to play with the same kind of ball as the expert, although it would pay him to sacrifice a few yards in driving power for greater durability. But nobody wants to level off performance differences by using a shorter ball than the other fellow can get.

The better type of golf course should

be a combination that would test the expert reasonably and still not penalize the average golfer, or the short hitter if he is hitting his shots decently, for him, says Jones. No long stretches of rough in front of the tees, or cross-hazards within the range of a modest drive.

What about the post-war international relations in golf—visiting entrants in the big league tournaments, and the Walker Cup and Ryder Cup affairs? Bob Jones thinks the international matches between this country and Great Britain, and the invasions of both amateurs and professionals for play in the championship will be promptly restored after V-J. To Jones there appears to be a likelihood of team matches and visiting competitors in the big tournaments—between the U. S. A. and Mexico, and Brazil and several other South American countries.

*Postwar Planning of Golf Courses*

**ROBERT BRUCE HARRIS**  
Golf Architect

664 N. Michigan Ave. Chicago, Ill.  
Phone: Whitehall 6530