

High Schools Acclaim Golf As Intramural Sport

By REX McMORRIS

Results of the efforts of the National Golf Foundation and the Athletic Journal in creating and fostering greater participation in golf by high school boys and girls during the 1947-48 school year are graphically illustrated in a 24-page report recently issued by the Foundation.

The report is based on results of a survey made at the close of the school year in which it was undertaken to ascertain the total number of boys and girls who participated, the total number of rounds of golf played, whether or not materials furnished for the program were adequate, whether or not the same or a similar golf program would be continued, and most important of all, a personal estimate of the acceptance and merit of the game of golf as a school sport by the instructor or director in charge.

In order to understand the full importance of the report it must first be understood that the program planned for the high school boys and girls was for the purpose of getting the individual interested in the game and not so much for the promotion of golf as an interscholastic competition. An advisory council composed of Herb Graffis, Editor, GOLFDOM and GOLFing magazines; John L. Griffith, Publisher, Athletic Journal; Eldon I. Jenne, Director of Health, Phys. Ed. and Recreation, Portland, Ore., Public Schools; Robert J. Strauss, Supervisor of Golf, Public Recreation Com., Cin., O.; Rex McMorris, Director, National Golf Foundation; and Theodore Payseur, Dir. of Athletics, Northwestern Univ., and Chmn., NCAA, Golf Section, was appointed in early 1947 to make recommendations and outline procedures to follow.

It was agreed that some type of an intramural tournament program would be the most beneficial because such a program would give each student an equal opportunity to participate regardless of ability. Knowledge of the limited budgets under which most secondary school athletic departments operate necessarily precluded the addition of another sports program unless materials for such an activity could be presented to the schools at no cost to themselves. For this reason the committee decided the following materials should be prepared and furnished to schools indicating an interest in conducting an intra-

mural golf tournament program during the course of the school year: an eight-page booklet, Suggestions for Conducting Intramural Golf Tournaments, giving information on where to play, who may enter, when to hold the tournament, use of the entry sheet, type of tournament, duration of tournament, use of the draw sheet, how to make pairings, how to distribute byes, how to seed, where to locate seeded entries, distributing non-seeded entries, setting deadlines for play, mechanics of match play, posting scores, securing awards and use of publicity; a 32-place draw sheet; attractive lithographed award certificates; and special gold-bronze junior champion medals for both boys and girls.

An attractive, four-color, 17 by 22 inch folder was mailed to more than 17,000 schools announcing the program and the materials that were available for the conduct of the intramural tournaments. Some measure of the success of the program can be gathered from the statistics which have been compiled in the report.

A total of nearly a 1,000 intramural golf tournaments were held throughout the country. New York led with a total of 80 tournaments followed by Illinois with 72; Michigan, 43; Mass., 40; and so on down the line. Only four states are listed as not holding any tournaments. An average of 195 rounds of golf were played per tournament or a grand total of 175,000 rounds in the course of the entire intramural program.

It is encouraging to note that of the total number of tournament programs registered with the Athletic Journal as a result of the direct mailing and more than nine pages of publicity in the Journal announcing the program and the availability of materials this is the first year for 64 per cent of them to include golf in their intramural sports activities. Of the remaining group who had previously included golf in their sports program 98 per cent indicated the materials furnished were instrumental in creating more interest and greater participation in the game.

In answer to the question, "Do you plan to conduct an intramural golf tournament program next year?" 97 per cent of those returning questionnaires indicated they would. In those instances where schools

will not continue the program reasons were given which deserve the attention of all who are concerned with the development of the game. Some indicated there were no public courses available in their respective communities and private courses were not open to play for classes or school events. In other instances distance and lack of transportation facilities prevented any wide degree of participation.

There are more cases than one cares to admit where club officials and professionals refuse to make courses available or cooperate in any way toward the development of golf as a school sport. This apparently is true in some communities even though students are sons and daughters of club members. In the main this is perhaps understandable when one considers the complete lack of understanding of the rules or a knowledge of the etiquette of the game on the part of the youngsters. On the other hand this is too often true of the adult fairway strollers.

Granted there is justifiable criticism to the extent that course privileges should be refused the youngsters, what about the day when the students grow up to be adults. Will they be wanted on the golf course then? If it is to be admitted there is a lack of facilities for the proper development of all phases of the game should the intramural program be curtailed or can there be some common meeting ground of cooperation with those who are in charge of existing facilities?

Quotation of comments from school instructors listed in the report without a doubt are the most convincing arguments that can be presented in behalf of any program which will further student participation in golf. There is enthusiasm on the part of the youngsters and a willingness on the part of teachers which should be cultivated—not thwarted. They have asked for rules of the game, posters or charts on etiquette, material for medal play, instruction charts, films and literature; all aids which if properly utilized should bring about a continually increasing number of avid golfers fairly well grounded in the fundamentals, with an understanding of the rules and a knowledge of the etiquette of the game.

The great majority of communities are beginning to realize that golf has as much or more to contribute to the welfare of youth as any other sport and grateful acknowledgement should be made where unusual effort is being made to provide adequate facilities for the game. As a carry-over sport that can be enjoyed by young and old alike regardless of age golf has no equal and there is evidence of an ever increasing realization of this fact. The following direct quotations give an in-

teresting cross section of the status of scholastic golf in the schools across the nation and provide a firsthand report on the activity which is creating a greater interest and participation in the game.

From New York: "We should increase our program 400 or 500 per cent now that we can use our municipal course for a nominal fee."

"Excellent idea for recreation as carry-over sport after high school and college days."

"The main difficulty in the promotion of golf in high school and junior colleges is the difficulty of securing equipment at reasonable prices. . . . I have found that every student who takes up golf becomes a potential lifetime golfer, and the school is the easiest place to bring the large masses of population into contact with golf."

From Iowa: "This is a good program. Can't it be carried out in the summer with the pros?"

"Golf course operators should be informed of this program and special rates be set for school students participating, as most rates are too expensive for the average high school student to play every day."

"Make arrangements with USGA members for use of courses."

From Wisconsin: "Well received in school and community. Golf course officials cooperated 100 per cent."

From Georgia: "Interest grew among players, student body, patrons, and spectators. Anticipate more enthusiasm next year."

From New Jersey: "I plan to conduct two such tournaments per year, one in the fall and one in the spring. During the winter months I hope to induce some professional to conduct instruction, perhaps one hour a week over a six weeks period."

From Ohio: "We had more interest from the students in the tournament than we have had in past golf teams."

From Texas: "We had noticed a lack of interest for golf among boys of high school age until we planned the tournament. Now they play every day."

From Indiana: "I appreciate your support in this movement. We are interested in developing golf among the youth, but we encounter all our opposition from the golf professional in our city. What we need most of all is the interest of the professional and his backing."

From Iowa: "Your program will lead to an interscholastic program equal to all spring sports."