

# How Pro Brother and I Operate A Paying Club

By TED WAKELY

Chippewa Country Club, Curtice, O.

Although golf will be in a seller's market for some time for the good of golf more playing space should be available. Yet some of our courses remain as deserted as cemeteries in the midst of this shortage. At Chippewa we try to get maximum use of our facilities without endangering enjoyment of the game by the golfers. We do this by having a membership, by accepting green fee play, and by accepting tournaments. This can be done profitably by hundreds of other courses.

Chippewa is the only 18-hole course on the east side of Toledo, a thriving city of 300,000. Play began here in 1926, as a private club. Everybody ran it—bankruptcy in 1938. Since then, as semi-public, it has operated in the black with an average of 150 members, increasing green fee play and an increasing number of golf tournaments. Chippewa is sound financially, the course equipment is modern for economy's sake, and the course is being continually improved.

Brother George, secretary of the Northern Ohio PGA, has been pro here for 12 years. George and I bought Chippewa two and a half years ago and we're not sorry. We manage it together. He is in the pro shop, I'm in the clubhouse. It's a business we never considered when we got our A.B.'s in Commerce. It's better.

## What It Costs

**The Membership:** There's no initiation fee. For their \$40 a year the men get unlimited golf and free showers. For their \$20 bill the women get unlimited golf (except Saturday and Sunday mornings), free showers, a lounge, free group instruction on Ladies' Day mornings, and money for golf prizes for sponsoring club dances. All lockers are \$6, or \$3 if shared. All the dues receipts from men and women pay half the cost of keeping up the grass. Dues receipts give us about 25% of the income derived from the use of that grass. We try to get dues paid by June 10th—it's a struggle. Those who seldom play pay at once, many of those who play 100 rounds a year pay in dribbles. But the latter buy more food, beer and golf supplies.

**Green fees:** For years the green fees have been \$1 on week days for 18 holes,

\$1.50 for all day. On week-ends the fee is \$1.50 for 18. We have not advertised for green fee play. Many play here for the first time as tournament players and are surprised and delighted that they can play here as green fee players.

The green fee player's pink receipts automatically apply on a membership, but if he elects to pay thusly the price of the membership is doubled, that is, \$80 for men. If the green fee player plays \$10 worth in the spring and decides to join the club, we give him \$5 credit for his \$10 in pink receipts. Ten joined that way spring of this year.

Our green fee players buy much of their golfing supplies from George because he knows them, knows their game, lets them try out equipment in play, doesn't oversell them, strings along with them and helps them get more fun and friendships out of golf. Scores of impromptu free lessons are given on the first and tenth tees; many more in play.

We have very little league play and could handle more of it. We do not actively solicit green fee play or league play because we have the membership to consider. They are backlogs we can fall back on if needed.

**Tournaments:** Our tournaments vary from ten to 300 players. The average tournament is nine foursomes, followed by a chicken or swiss steak dinner. Usually there will be twice as many banqueting as playing golf. We do not solicit tournaments. They come here year after year because they can play an uncrowded, well-manicured, gently-rolling, interesting golf course; because they get good food and friendly treatment; because they have a good time. Chippewa is not made for large, spectator tournaments. Winding Crane Creek and a smaller creek cross 14 fairways—bridges are not made for surging crowds. There are few sightseeing elevations.

We handle tournaments on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, and in September and October on Saturdays too. We average three tournaments a week for the golf season. Ten percent of our tournaments are golf only, or maybe with a sandwich plate thrown in. We

handled several of these small tournaments on Saturdays in August by teeing them off later in the morning.

### Members Get Preference

We try to give the members preferred rights on the golf course. Last year, as far as we know, only five members had to wait a few minutes because of a tournament. We tell the tournament chairmen that if a member comes along with a foursome that foursome is to be inserted on the first tee at once. These chairmen are very cooperative. There is a fine feeling of cooperation between members, green fee players and tournament players. Each knows that his own position is helped by the presence of the other two groups. The member knows that his dues are low because the green fee players pay a good part of the upkeep. And vice versa. The green fee player likes the prestige the membership gives to the course, he prefers an uncrowded semi-public layout to a munny free-for-all. The green fee players mix with the members and learn to take pride in the course, pick up pointers on sportsmanship and to consider the benefits of membership.

We make each department pay its way. Thanks to efficient dining room management by Mrs. George Wakely and delicious food by Chef Romie Pietrowski—even the dining room makes money.

There's nothing to beat good food at reasonable prices. Claude Cooper is the friendliest and best-liked lockerroom man in the district. It all adds up.

**There are problems.** For instance, during the past few years there has been a tendency for wives to join and husbands pay green fees—and both still regard the club as theirs. Like many other clubs we are thinking of having the first member of the family pay the \$40, the other members of the family \$20 each.

The road to the course is narrow, steep-ditched and one-way bridged. They'll have to fix it soon. The telephone service has been abominable—now we are about to have a Toledo exchange. Everything is getting better and better.

**The Dutch Elm blight?** We've been waiting for it and planting trees each fall. . . . Scotch pine, oaks, hard maple, gingko, honey locust, hackberry.

### Solving Maintenance Problems

**Greenkeeping problems?** Plenty. Up to 18 months ago greenkeeper Joe Miklosko was a factory machinist with a yen for healthy, outdoor work. This year, many say, his greens are among the best in the district. And what a hot, humid, dry and windy summer we had! Joe, George and I attend greenkeeping conferences. The Mid-West at Purdue we like best. For information we pounce on fertilizer salesmen, Worthington distributor Bill Barton, Golfdom articles and advertisers, other

Approach to the 18th green of the Chippewa CC, Curtice, O., where Ted Wakely and Brother George, club professional and sec'y., Northern Ohio PGA, are getting near maximum play by operating course on semi-private basis. Accepting green fee play and outside tournaments to augment private membership play has accounted for sound financial operation since purchase in 1938.



district greenkeepers. It's not so much what you know as it is being able to find the right information, quick.

For instance, the No. 1 green was always the worst—scald pocket in the center, grass sparse. We called in Bill Barton, Mac MacIlheny from Country Club and former greenkeeper Wilbur Pfeiffer. We burned out the Washington bent with ammonium sulphate, disced thoroughly, retiled, hauled in 30 dump loads of soil and ten of topdressing, regraded and enlarged the green. We got information and Congressional and Arlington stolons from O. M. Scott. The green is a honey now. It was a lot of fun watching technology and nature working together on this. This business can be fun—especially when you are positive you don't know it all.

Our other bad green was No. 18. A par 3 and near the clubhouse with many playing extra balls. It always had scald, dry spots, and other unsightly patches. We questioned those who might know the answer, read up on it. We removed a large wild cherry which shaded too much and from windward. We dug a trench on the sides, cut out tree roots heading for food and drink from the green; inserted heavy tar paper. The green was spiked several times with the Overgreen, several times by tine forking. We enlarged the green, added sandy topdressing and 200 plugs. Two men worked four days on this green; notice the picture, it is now one of our best.

**The bridge job:** The spring flood washed away our large tractor bridge. We colared member Delos Nissen who is the Ottawa County engineer, drove out to the creosoting plant and talked with their engineer, then talked with a state highway engineer. As a result we have a much better bridge that Joe and his men had fun erecting.

### Fall Work Program

This fall we're rebuilding three tees, planting 50 trees and cutting down a few offending ones. We have work to do on creek banks. We'll apply a bit of 2,4-D and a lot more fertilizer. There's painting to be done, trees to trim, fairways to patch, dirt to haul. We'll try to get it done before the snows set in. There's nine months outside work on a golf course in northern Ohio, then you dive into the toolshed for more.

**Planning pays.** You consider your type of golf play and how to speed it up along with course upkeep. You try to plan for a minimum of hand labor. You consider winds, leaves, floods, ice storms, freezes. You think of damage suits and the increasing number of older people, of recip-

rocity, of giving players more for their money, of replacing equipment—there are a lot of things. We've found you can save 10 to 30% by shopping.

There's need for a complete treatise on golf course building and upkeep. I hear one is being readied. There's need of getting more young men interested in greenkeeping and one good book will help.

### Golf As Service Industry

Golf professionals, club managers and greenkeepers ask about the perils and profits of owning and operating a golf course. There are both. Golf is a service industry and more and more of our employment has to be found in the service industries. That and technology. Our factories are increasingly automatic, our farms more and more mechanized. With the inevitable 30-hour week approaching, longer vacations, better roads, more automobiles, daylight savings, pension plans, growth of suburbs, less good fishing and hunting, less church-going, better golf instruction, better golf equipment, better grasses—the future looks rosy indeed.

Golf is growing and it's safest to get into a growing industry. When you own and run a golf course you don't have to listen to greens committees or boards. You act now. You can cut down if things get tough, but if things get tough, prices will go down and the unemployed will have more time to play.

Owning and operating a golf course can give a lot of satisfaction. Sure—at times when you are vexed with countless problems piled on 16-hour days you wonder if it is worth it. Then again you see you are helping people have a good time and you think there is no business like golf. You think of "the greatest good for the greatest number" . . . you consider Kant's philosophy of . . . "perfection for yourself, happiness for the other fellow."

Often you are surprisingly aware of increased profits from "giving more." You realize that in your golf course you are building a beauty spot—one with utility. Statistics show that about 90 percent of our people are doing things other than what they would like to be doing. For those in golf I think the percentage would be ten.

### WOMEN'S WESTERN DATES

Women's Western GA will hold its 21st annual invitation Open championship at Cherry Hills CC, Denver, Colo., June 19-24, 1950. The WWGA 50th annual amateur championship will be played at Exmoor CC, Highland Park, Ill., Aug. 14-19. Place and date of WWGA Junior championship will be announced in November.