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Golf Beats the Gun --Gets into Fighting Shape

By HERB GRAFFIS

Few Americans doubt that the Korean war is the first hot action in a showdown between Communist planetary imperialism and the free nations whose desire is to mind their own business without dictation from Moscow.

Our unpreparedness to handle the situation in Korea is evidence to any informed and mentally sound person in the world that we have a deep longing for peace and a childlike trust that others share that longing. The present crisis has been taken in stride by Americans and we've been shocked into action without being stam-peded.

Now we're in war and in the first month we have been so severely beaten by an overwhelming surplus of fighting power in the field that no thinking American now can remain blind to the necessity of immediately adjusting to a state of strength for hostilities.

At this writing it appears that controls of distribution and prices are inevitable, although the public hasn't been officially advised of this probability. However, action has been as might be expected, a combination of foresight and hoarding.

The golf business had plenty of reminders during World War II that Washington doesn't consider golf an essential wartime business. The game fitted into wartime conditions as well as any sport and a whole lot more usefully than some sports, due to the age range of golf participation and the play by male and female workers. The outdoor nature of the game was a balance for high-pressure wartime indoor work. But golf didn't do much of a selling job in convincing top authorities of the game's wartime value until fairly late in World War II.

Golf ranges and courses at military installations and the demand of war factory workers for public golf did more to sell official Washington on the game's valuable

function in wartime than was done by organized elements in golf. That may be an important element in finding the proper place for golf in the wartime economy which looks to be in prospect for some years.

Buying Rushes Limited

World War II experience was that private golf clubs, when they had money to do so, didn't do much buying ahead of demand.

The result was that maintenance equipment got into bad condition and with the operating labor and repair facilities available during that war the superintendent was a weary, worried genius if he could keep his course near to what he had regarded as normally good condition.

Since maintenance machinery became available after World War II and clubs generally have been in good financial shape the machinery picture has been getting into pretty fair condition. But the major manufacturers of golf course maintenance equipment have been behind on deliveries to courses, parks and cemeteries. Consequently there hasn't been much chance to place a flood of orders that would bring panic buying.

Some orders of maintenance equipment for spring delivery already have been placed but nobody can book such orders at firm prices. Whether material for maintenance equipment will be curtailed or virtually cut to nothing is anybody's guess.

Two things, however, are certain. One is that it's wise to get orders placed early and stand a better chance of getting what is available, when it is available. The other is that the leading manufacturers intend to stay in the golf equipment business regardless of temporary interruptions, and are not disposed to get scared or to let anybody get the idea they think—whether it's a long war or a short one, a big war or a small



HOGAN GETS CHAMPION'S CHAMPION AWARD

At Motor City Open Ben Hogan gets sound movie projector as Champion of the Month award from Bob Stranahan's spark plug company. Left to right at the presentation: Frank Walsh, the dapper Student Prince; Harry Wismer, ABC sports director, who presented the award; the durable Mr. Hogan; and Dale Stafford, managing editor, Detroit Free Press.

one—they have any question about the eventual American victory and return to normal marketing of their products.

Seed Short — Fertilizer Ample

This year's residential building boom accounted for practically cleaning out stocks of grass seeds. Bluegrass and redbud 1950 crops appear to be smaller than those of 1949. The fescue crop is good. The bent seed crop isn't in yet.

With no chance of a residential building boom continuing it seems logical that the year's crops of seed suitable for golf courses will be adequate. Authorities say there is no sense in seed hoarding.

Fertilizer is fairly plentiful and prices haven't jumped as have prices of other items. It is plain that any club that has the money had better look into its fertilizer needs immediately and see that a good fall job of fertilizing is done. If the war is a short one the club is still ahead and if the war economy is prolonged, turf had better be put into best condition for withstanding possible risk of grass food rationing.

The Korean hot war started when golf ball manufacturers' inventories were

dwindling seasonally to the lowest point. Hot weather, vacations and the production, seasoning and packaging procedures in ball plants call for getting the manufacturing operations out of the way as early as possible each year and to the fullest extent possible.

The result was that when the buying rush for golf balls started it very quickly reduced stocks so out-of-line buying for possible hoarding or speculative purposes was promptly brought under control by leading ball manufacturers. Orders, up to the rational limit imposed by low inventories, were booked on the basis warranted by the past business of pros and dealers.

Dealers whose past business in golf balls hadn't been much made a rush to load up but couldn't get what they wanted.

During World War II the job done by the pros in collecting balls for reconditioning kept enough balls on sale so no player had to give up a round of golf because of the lack of a ball.

Manufacturers didn't want to play into the hands of hoarding retailers during the buying rush in July and have kept the

available stocks of good balls largely with pros.

In some cases pros have rationed their stocks among members rather than keep pro capital tied up but the pro knows that when the boxes of balls are in members' possession that will mean a reduction in sales to members later on. The private club pro couldn't wisely load up for speculative purposes. If the war lasts and there is a ball shortage the private club pros who boosts the retail price of balls to a long margin over his purchase price is risking the loss of his job as a profiteer. The same member who would buy steaks and butter and gas without coupons during a war or be a good customer of a bootlegger during prohibition suddenly would get a hell of a spell of "crime must go" if he thought his pro was holding him up on a hard-to-get new golf ball.

Golf clubs, due to a prolonged strike in a large shaft manufacturers' plant, haven't been available in any marked surplus quantities this year. As a matter of fact, three lines of irons have been far behind in deliveries. Hence the club situation has not favored hoarding or speculative buying.

Prices of clubs are going up but the smart businessman pro doesn't think he should go off the deep end in tying up his capital in stocks of clubs for a possibly long period of wartime control. The pro without much capital to tie up won't be able to get shipment of much club stock anyway.

Manufacturers' orders of leather, nylon and canvas seem to assure that there won't be any trouble in getting golf bags for a year. There's no telling what the situation would be if the government should divert this material to its own use.

Thus the high spots of the supply situation for golf clubs appeared near the end of July. There hasn't been any indication of "scare" buying by clubs, pros or course superintendents but there has been ordering and stocking, as far as limited stocks allow, on a rather reasonable basis, considering the circumstances.

What Are Clubs Doing ?

Private golf clubs and daily fee courses face the prospect of wartime conditions in much better condition than they were in when World War II started. A great many of the private clubs in metropolitan districts have waiting lists and their financial statements are sound. In making postwar improvements from 1946 on they seldom stretched thin.

Operating costs of courses and club-houses have been high, although considering the heft of the dollar of recent years the operations have been more economical than ever before.

In the larger metropolitan districts the private clubs haven't got a fairly large

percentage of members belonging to several clubs as was the condition prior to World War II. That condition accounted for a painful decrease in duplicate membership at some fancy clubs, in the New York metropolitan district especially.

One new factor in the private club situation in metropolitan areas is the large number of young men from 30 to 35 who are highly desirable private club members but who haven't joined on account of high prices and waiting lists. It may be that such members will be welcomed in at favorable terms even though the volume of play may distress some elders who hate to wait on a tee.

Women's play has increased greatly since the end of World War II. Junior play, and the golf instruction of youngsters at courses, in schools and colleges, has increased so tremendously that it doesn't seem possible many courses should want for traffic.

There is a shortage of good fee courses and public courses. Obviously the character of the game makes it fill a need for physical and mental conditioning in tense times.

Private and fee course officials and municipal course management are showing far more of a disposition to look ahead and plan ahead than they did in 1941, 1942 and 1943 when failure to recognize the trend and beat the gun with their own plans led them into difficulties.

Now foresighted officials are wisely considering what might happen during the showdown between the pursuit of happiness and the bossy ideologies. That's one of the surest signs that golf will weather the storm—if, as and when the communists decide to force a big storm—and by sound foresight contribute to putting and keeping the nation strong.

Draft examination figures show there's vast room for physical and psychiatric improvement among the young in this country. Considering the fine showing of amateur and professional golfers and caddies in World War II golf demonstrated itself to be a first class conditioner.

Hartman Heads Iowa Greenkeepers

J. S. Hartman, Mason City (Ia.) CC was elected pres., Iowa Greenkeepers' Assn., at the association's annual meeting, held at Des Moines G&CC. Walter Fuchs, Cedar Rapids CC, was elected vp., and Roger Fritsch, Homewood GC, Ames, was re-elected sec.-treas. There were 62 members present.

H. L. Lantz of Iowa State College reported on the turf research work at the Ames gardens. Lantz said U3 Bermuda did not withstand the winter but the reason may have been late planting.