

Associate Member Plan Helps Club Over Financial Bunker

Lifesaving \$40,000 produced by giving limited privileges to outsiders on an annual and daily fee basis

By ALAN ARTACH

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Like many clubs, Meadow Hills early in 1963 reached the point where it was hard pressed for operating funds. Assessments had already come near reaching the saturation mark. It was agreed that it was out of the question to tax the 140 members with an assessment on an assessment to keep the course going even though they as well as the club management realized that something drastic had to be done.

Then Bernard Schaffner, the club president, and Ian McPhee, the club manager, got together and decided the club either had to face the facts of life or face what would amount to eviction. The first thing they had to figure out was how much money was needed to run every operation of the club on an annual basis. Then, they set up a budget for each department that was to be adhered to right down to the last, critical dollar.

Getting operating figures assembled and working up the resolve to abide by

a budget isn't easy. But by comparison with finding the money that will keep an operation solvent, these preliminary tasks are routine. The brain wracking comes when a search for adequate revenue is undertaken.

Gives Limited Privileges

After talking to other club officials, bankers and assorted financial experts, Schaffner and McPhee came to the conclusion that the only thing to do at Meadow Hills was resort to an associate membership plan. This, as you know, gives limited privileges to non-members in return for payment of an annual fee plus the payment of a fee every time a club facility, such as the course, is used. It has bailed out many a club in the past and, of course, is going to save many more in the future.

Regular members usually become greatly disgruntled when they first hear that their club is going to resort to the associate member plan, but when they find that it will save not only assessments but possibly the club itself, they become mollified. We went through all this at

Meadow Hills when the plan was adopted.

This is the second year that our associate member plan has been in force. In 1963 it produced a lifesaving \$40,000 in extra revenue for the club, and this year it may produce even a little more because the associate rates have been increased. However, green fees have been reduced for 1964 for the associate players.

How Plan Works

Here are the main features of the plan as it was carried out in 1963:

An associate membership card cost \$18 — tax included;

Green fees were \$2.50 on weekdays and \$4 on weekends and holidays;

Associate members could invite three guests to play with them at the cost of regular green fees plus \$1.50 per guest charge;

Dining room and bar facilities were available to associate members, their families and guests;

Associate members were permitted to reserve tee times, starting on Wednesdays. Private members were extended permanent tee times on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays;

Pool and lockerroom privileges were not extended to associate members.

The program met with great public approval. With little or no publicity describing the plan, 500 associate membership cards were immediately sold. Within a month or so we had filled our quota of 900. Private members at Meadow Hills at first feared that with the influx of new players the course would be overrun during prime playing time.

Eight-Minute Intervals

But we found that by going to eight-minute tee times and by exercising close pro shop supervision on the starting tees, congestion was almost completely avoided. Occasionally, there were complaints from both the private and associate members that they were playing under some pressure, but these never became a source of great trouble. Actually, most of our golfers learned to play at a little faster tempo and found that it not only improved their games but that they enjoyed it.

For 1964, associate member cards were



Here is a Par 3 course that was recently constructed at the Southampton (Bermuda) Golf and Beach Club. Seven of the 18 holes are shown in the photo. Course was designed by Alfred H. Tull, Larchmont, N. Y. architect.

increased from \$18 to \$24. At the same time weekday green fees were reduced to \$1.75 and weekend and holiday fees to \$3.50. Associate members are still permitted to bring three guests each time they play, but the individual guest charge has been increased from \$1.50 to \$3. The reason for the increase is that it was found that guest privileges were abused somewhat in 1963 to avoid the purchase of associate membership cards.

Heavy Weekend Patronage

We kept close records on rounds played in 1963 and found that approximately 25 per cent of our associate members came out on weekends or holidays. But only about one out of ten took advantage of their cards to play through the week. So, for five days at least, our regular or private members had the course pretty much to themselves.

Dining room and bar facilities are still available to associates on the same basis as in 1963. In the last few months we have provided a card room for them to use as a kind of private lounge. Because of the probability of overcrowding, however, we still can't extend pool and lockerroom privileges to the associates.

The associate members have formed their own association within the club and have set up a handicap system. This enables them to have team matches and play tournaments and also has broadened their spending in the clubhouse because they hold quite a few parties, buffets, etc. in conjunction with their competitions.

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and with the track management in the saddle, its future is well assured.

On the other hand, the uneasy state of affairs at Bay Meadows makes its future unpredictable. Tanforan, where the play has grown to challenge that of Golden Gate Fields in only three years, has been sold. New owners have announced that the track will be razed and a real estate development constructed in its place. But the Laws believe they have a couple of years remaining, and a favorable settlement in store if their lease is shortened.

May Open Elsewhere

When they are uprooted at Tanforan the Laws family may be ready to open a course at some other racetrack. They are looking for a likely spot now, but may have to go beyond the Bay Area. If they find it, the good will they've established at Tanforan and their contribution to race-track golf are sure to cause golfers to come pounding down the stretch in search of the best prize of all — a darn nice place to play golf.

Cut Club Freight Rates

Braniff International Airways of Dallas, Tex., has announced a 50 per cent reduction in excess baggage charges for carrying golf clubs between the U.S. and South America. Between U. S. cities and Mexico City, Braniff will charge a flat rate of \$4 for carrying clubs.

Associate Memberships

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Junior and Women's programs also have been established for the associates. Women who have associate member cards, pay \$15 per year for golf privileges plus green fees. They are only slightly restricted as to when they can play — being barred from the course on Men's day and until 1:30 p.m. on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.

Revise Starting Time

As a concession to regular members, we adopted a revised starting time sys-



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tem for weekend play in 1964. Their schedule has been staggered so as to leave every other tee time open for them on Saturdays and Sundays.

Private members at Meadow Hills have generally accepted the associate membership program, although at times there is bound to be some resentment of the intrusion that is inherent in this kind of a plan. Club officials, however, have worked hard to arrange golf schedules so that there is a minimum of inconvenience to the regular members and, in the future, further refinements of the tee-off time system will be made. We have brought our dining room operations to a break-even point and, as far as we can see, nobody has been inconvenienced because the restaurant and bar facilities have been thrown open to a larger clientele.

Perhaps the associate membership plan is not the ideal solution, but small clubs that are rather financially hard pressed have no choice but to adopt it if they are to stay in business. It has enabled us to make improvements to both the course and clubhouse and more of these are planned for the future when increased revenue will become available. These things have been done without adding to the private member's assessment and with very little, if any, loss of privileges to him.

No Personal Responsibility

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clear in other parts is immaterial. It is not necessary that he should constantly appear throughout the instrument to act only as a representative.

"Since the ads were all sent under the same cover, one cannot be read without the other. As to contractual liability, they establish that Palmer was acting solely in his capacity as vice-president of the Birdie Co., Inc.

"There was no personal liability assumed by Palmer."

After commenting upon the fact that this phase of the action is unique and not previously decided by the courts of the state, the court discussed and disagreed with authorities cited by the plaintiffs