

Golf's business biceps bulge

New highs in golfers, courses, consumer sales point to soaring figures this year.

By ROGER GANEM

Golf business surged to record heights in 1965 and the momentum that carried it to new levels is not leveling off in the foreseeable future. For this rosy outlook we can thank private enterprise, alert municipal planning commissions, the federal government, the abolishment of the excise tax and golf's universal appeal.

There'll be much more than the increase in the number of golfers (from 7,000,000 in 1964 to 7,750,000 in 1965), the increase in the number of courses (from 7,893, to 8,323), and the increase in golf consumer sales (from \$192,300,000, to \$213,200,000). The other surprise will be the money made available by the abolishment of the 20 per cent excise tax. It's a bonanza. The funds formerly put aside to pay Uncle Sam will be used to improve conditions and services both inside and outside the club. Additional help will be hired, present employees will be better paid and the general well being of the inner structure of clubs will be strengthened.

The majority of clubs that will keep dues at the same level or increase them to include the tax also plans to invest in irrigation systems, machinery and fairway improvements, for clubhouse expansion, for bigger and better locker rooms, pro shops and clubhouse furniture, and for adding, where none previously existed, the facilities for such related recreational activities as tennis and swimming.

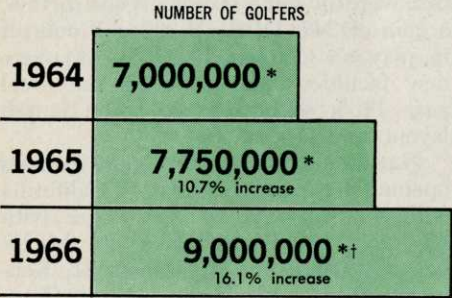
And for the infidels who say that golf is just a fine way to spoil a good walk, here's a trend that may begin to worry them: Golf car sales for the 1965 season increased by 13 per cent over last year. Total sales were estimated to be 25,700 or 3,600 more than in 1964. This means there are an estimated 102,000 electric and gasoline cars presently in use. Who's walking?

In 1965, approximately 7,750,000 golfers played 15 rounds or more. This figure, furnished by the National Golf Foundation, discloses an increase of 750,000 golfers, which is an increase maintained annually for the past few years. Now, if you think this explains why there's been so much waiting around before you can get on the first tee and off the course, consider this bomb: Over 9,000,000 are expected to play golf this year—an increase of 1¼ million over 1965. This is a lot of men, women, and children loose on the nation's 8,323 courses! To accommodate them, the 622 courses now in some stage of construction will be heavily, almost constantly played. So what else is new?

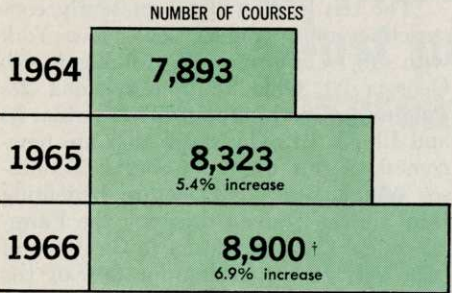
"Golf is no longer a rich man's sport," states Bob Youngblood, of the National Association of Sporting Goods Dealers. "The new facilities opening to players almost every day, the great job being done by the National Golf Foundation, and the need for good recreation has

made golf the second fastest growing sport, second only to billiards. The biggest factors in this rise in participation are the availability of more public fee courses and the public links players, themselves."

One indication of the spirit of the public links players is the number of



*plus approximately 1,000,000 golfers who play less than 15 rounds a year.



† estimated

them who enter the annual nation-wide Amateur Public Links tournament conducted by the United States Golf Association. Exactly 2,683 played in the 1965 event, and a similar number took part in 1964. Furthermore, the golf was outstanding, proof that when more golfers can find places to play and practice, their games improve.

"In 1965," Mr. Youngblood continues, "consumer sales reached a high of \$213,200,000, a jump of 10.9% over the \$192,300,000 in 1964. The annual growth rate in the ten-year period from 1955 to 1964 was a flat 10%. The rate between 1960 and 1964 was 15.6%. The latter period was particularly active. We expect at least a 10% growth in the next year."

The National Golf Foundation, organized in 1936 as a nonprofit corporation by the leading manufacturers of golf playing equipment to give information and advice on the organization, financing, construction, maintenance and operation of golf courses, reports that 1965 saw a 22% increase in the number of courses being built or expanded, from 470 in 1964 to 576 in 1965, and an increase in golfers from 7,000,000 to 7,750,000, as already reported.

Colonel Harry Eckoff, Executive Director of NGF, says of golf's healthy state, "I am happy to report that new golf course development reached an all-time high during 1965 with these 576 new facilities opening for play. A breakdown of new golf course construction for 1965 is as follows: New regulation length courses opened—346 (compared to 292 in 1964); new regulation length additions—104 (82 in 1964); new par 3's—115 (90 in 1964) and new par 3 additions—11 (6 in 1964).

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1964 AGMA CENSUS REPORT

Item	Unit of Measure	Quantity		Value	
		1963	1964	1963	1964
Golf Clubs	each	10,000,279	10,731,574	65,133,965	70,439,099
Golf Balls	dozen	5,694,329	6,145,199	40,899,292	43,473,126
Golf Bags	each	732,310	863,492	8,154,473	10,086,682
Golf Carts	each	218,792	172,174	3,436,166	2,774,725
Other golf equipment				1,739,037	1,475,414
				128,249,046	

RATIO OF GOLF COURSES TO POPULATION BY STATES

State	Total Courses		Pop. Per Course 1964
	1963	1964	
North Dakota	70	72	8,958
Vermont	41	45	9,088
New Hampshire	62	66	9,909
Wyoming	29	32	10,718
South Dakota	67	66	10,833
Maine	80	81	12,209
Kansas	179	175	12,714
Iowa	199	213	12,938
Nebraska	107	110	13,454
Montana	47	48	14,687
Wisconsin	226	246	16,695
Idaho	41	41	16,878
Nevada	21	24	17,000
Minnesota	193	205	17,175
New Mexico	50	54	18,666
Oklahoma	121	124	19,879
Connecticut	131	138	20,043
Massachusetts	254	265	20,143
Indiana	216	233	20,708
Michigan	354	386	20,979
Florida	264	270	21,129
West Virginia	83	84	21,392
Oregon	80	87	21,505
Rhode Island	40	42	21,761
Hawaii	29	32	21,906
North Carolina	201	220	22,054
Arizona	70	71	22,267
Colorado	79	87	22,597
Ohio	414	440	22,954
South Carolina	101	110	23,227
Washington	118	125	23,872
Pennsylvania	430	458	25,019
Illinois	389	410	25,582
Kentucky	116	121	26,107
Missouri	157	165	26,721
Utah	32	37	26,810
Virginia	156	161	27,192
Delaware	18	18	27,277
Texas	353	372	27,948
Arkansas	68	68	28,426
Georgia	142	150	28,626
New York	544	563	31,820
Tennessee	114	119	31,915
Mississippi	64	72	32,138
Alabama	100	106	32,141
California	474	507	35,668
New Jersey	168	179	37,329
Louisiana	87	89	38,966
Maryland & D.C.	94	103	41,165
Alaska	4	3	83,333
	7477	7893	24,240

Average
(1963
25,200)

BUSINESS BICEPS

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"Golf courses under construction at the end of the year likewise showed a marked increase over 1964. At the end of the fiscal year 1964, there were 464 golf courses of all types under construction. At the close of fiscal year 1965, 622 were in some stage of construction, a gain of 34%. Of the 8,323 golf courses in play on October 1, 1965, 430 were new facilities opened during the fiscal year 1965, with 315 regulation length layouts and 115 par 3's.

"Leading this list with new courses opening for play this year is California with 49, followed by New York with 36, Ohio 31, Pennsylvania 30, Michigan 29, Minnesota 22, Illinois 21, Kentucky 20, and Florida and North Carolina 19 each.

"The ten leading states presently constructing new courses are New York with 48, California 42, Michigan 39, Georgia 29, Ohio 28, Pennsylvania 28, Tennessee 26, Kentucky 24, Florida 23 and Illinois 21. The states that are newcomers to this list are Georgia, Tennessee and Kentucky. They are benefiting from the help given them by the Farmer's Home Administration in the form of cash outlays accounting for 80% of the costs for a period of 40 years.

The ratio of golf courses to population by states for the year 1964 and the total number of courses in each state for both 1963 and 1964 can be found on this page.

"But the real shot in the arm to more golfing facilities is the municipalities," says Eckoff. "Now there are 38 of them proposing or building new courses, thanks to planning commissions staffed by men who do not want their townships to lose valuable land to real estate developers. The common practice is to condemn the property and to buy out the present owners for the purpose of converting the land to golf course use. The alert planning commissions are taking measures to prevent this loss of land. One of the country's outstanding municipal projects is that of the Montgomery County Planning Commission in Norristown, Pennsylvania. They are to be commended for their program."

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With more people having more money to spend on their favorite pastime, it isn't surprising that golf is the big leader in sales of athletic and sporting goods, according to the Athletic Goods Manufacturing Association Census Report for 1964, the latest available. On the basis of manufacturers' selling prices, which is different from the totals given by the National Association of Sporting Goods Dealers, golf equipment sales in 1964 totalled \$128,249,046, about an 8% increase over 1963.

Golf equipment sales accounted for 51% of the athletic and sporting goods total sales of \$250,254,463 for 1964. A breakdown of golf equipment sales for 1964 and 1963 is on page 27.

The Athletic Goods Manufacturers Association breaks down golf club sales into four categories of both irons and woods. Based on manufacturers' selling prices, including Federal Excise Tax, their price ranges for irons are \$3.50 and below, \$3.51 to \$5.00, \$5.01 to \$7.50 and \$7.51 and over. It is interesting to muse over the fact that the highest cost bracket accounted for a total of \$21,939,317, or 49% of the \$44,213,328 of all iron clubs sold in 1964.

The woods are indexed at those selling for \$5.20 and below, \$5.21 to \$7.50, \$7.51 to \$11.00 and \$11.01 and over. Indication of the demands of the golfers who know that they will be only as good as the tools they use is the fact that in 1964 they purchased \$12,614,149 worth of the most expensive woods. Not so surprising is the fact that this is also 49% of the total sales, a perfect match for the irons.

Do not be misled by the decrease in quantity of golf cart sales for 1964. The 172,174 is a total of only two categories, carts selling for \$9.01 to \$12.00 (50,199) and from \$12.01 and over (121,975), whereas the 1963 figure included carts that also sold for \$9.00 and below. The data on sales of carts in this less-expensive price range was not included in the 1964 report.

Golf bags which sell for \$6.01 to \$15.00 continue to account for approxi-

mately 46.9% of total sales, an increase of about 3% over 1963. The largest jump is seen in bags selling for \$15.01 to \$24.00, from 61,662 bags in 1963 to 93,667 in 1964, and in the highest bracket, from 64,083 to 74,245 bags.

The taste for golf balls is the same as with clubs and bags. The most expensive category, from \$7.51 and over accounted for 54.6% of total sales.

What does the future hold for golf? Will there be continued growth?

"On the projection of expected population increases alone," Mr. Eckoff states, "it is doubtful that there ever will be enough golf courses to meet the growing demand. In 1931 there was one golf course for approximately every 21,000 persons in the nation. Today there is a golf course for about every 24,000.

"By 1980 the nation's population will increase another 26%, approximately 50 million more people. And even on the most conservative assumptions, leading economists predict that the U. S. economy will grow faster during the next 15 years than it has at any time during the past 50.

"What does this mean to the golf industry? It means more people wanting to play golf and the continued need for more courses. It means there will be a continued growing need for more golf professionals, golf course superintendents and club managers to staff the new facilities needed. It means increasing business opportunities in all phases of the golf world.

"Golf will continue to attract players from every economic level of American life. A year ago the Foundation predicted there would be 7 million golfers playing on 8,000 courses by the year's end. That it now a reality.

"Our goal for the nation by 1970: 10 million golfers on 10,000 golf courses. We believe it, too, will be accomplished."

They're On The Ball

Nassau County, Long Island, N. Y., can tell how many golf balls it has on hand with a push of a button. The county's automated materials inventory lists 28,000 items.
