

SANDBAGGING THE SANDBAGGERS

NEW YORK—The United States Golf Assn. has revised its handicap system for 1973. Adopting an innovation called "stroke control," the change undoubtedly will lower the handicaps of nearly every golfer in America. The move has been interpreted by some observers as an attempt to "lower the boom on falsely handicapped golfers," who are sometimes known as "sandbaggers."

"We're just doing it because a survey showed most of our members want it," said Frank Hannigan, assistant director of the USGA. "We're bowing to the will of our constituents."

Specifically, stroke control is a rule designed to eliminate from handicap computations excessive strokes taken by a golfer on any given hole which have no relation to—or give any indication of—his average or normal playing ability. It places a ceiling on the number of strokes a player may record on his scorecard on a hole—but only for handicapping purposes.

For example: Golfers who plus or scratch players may record no

score higher than a bogey (one over par) on any given hole.

Golfers with handicaps of one to 18 may record no score higher than a double bogey (two over par) on any given hole, the number of double bogeys being limited according to handicap. (A two-handicap player, for instance, scoring three double bogeys in a round, must convert one of the double bogeys into a bogey for the purpose of handicapping.)

Golfers with handicaps higher than 18 may turn in triple bogeys (three over par), but no more than two triple bogeys a round.

"I'm not saying this will cure anything," Hannigan said, "but it won't make anything worse."

Proponents of the new rule point out that most handicaps are match play and that very high holes sometimes throw out of whack the real difference between two golfers. Also, it is rumored that a breed of golfer exists who deliberately inflates his handicap with high holes.

"In extreme cases," said Hannigan, "some people might inten-

tionally put high holes in every round except those in which he really wants to play hard."

The subject of golf handicapping in the United States admittedly is an esoteric subject, understood completely by about as many people as understand *élan vital* completely. "But you ought to hear them argue about it," Hannigan said. "Everyone has his own theories."

The USGA traditionally has rejected proposals for the stroke control rule, arguing that its handicapping system had its own built-in checks and balances. Apparently enough of the organization's 4,000 members thought otherwise and persuaded the USGA's handicap committee to overwhelmingly endorse the stroke control rule this year.

The edict is certain to create considerable interest, if not controversy, among higher handicapped golfers.

"We don't know who wouldn't use the new rule," Hannigan said. "Everybody who plays golf is involved in it." □

REPRINTED FROM GOLF MAGAZINE, MAY, 1973

FEDERAL MONIES ON TAP TO QUALIFIED COURSES

WASHINGTON, D.C.—At a time when President Nixon is bearing down hard on Federal spending programs, golf courses may get an unexpected bonanza.

It turns out that there is \$50 million of new money in the Federal budget for the coming year, starting July 1, that could be used to build public golf courses.

Tack on to that sum \$128 million left over from presently available Federal funds.

But before localities get too excited about going into the golf business, they should be aware of one hitch: This money "can" go for golf courses, but it doesn't "have" to.

Actually, the funds are held by the Interior Department's Bureau of Outdoor Recreation and they are earmarked for any local projects that will promote recrea-

tion—parks, municipal lakes, tennis courts, general recreational areas or one or more of many other things, including golf courses.

"The trick," says one Federal official, "is for a locality that wants a golf course to know who the proper authority to work through is and also to draw up a convincing argument for the course's construction."

In general, these are the guides for obtaining golf course construction funds.

The local authority, whether it is a municipal agency, township, city, county or whatever, must draw up a plan for the course and its estimated costs. This proposal, in turn, must be submitted to the state agency handling such proposals. Federal funds can only be granted for course construction if the state

agency has first approved the project and then submitted it to the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation for approval.

If the request is successful, the Federal government will match the funds 50-50 put up by state and local authorities for the course.

Should the budget request go through Congress, and it is likely that it will, there will be three years in which to qualify for a portion of the \$50 million that will become available later this year.

This three-year cut-off period also applies to the present \$128 million in the Federal coffers. Although the time limitation is running out on some of this money, Federal officials say there is still time to get a hunk of it. But the word from Washington is "hurry up your plans." □