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Public Golf in England Thrives on Adversity

By VERNE WICKHAM

Public golf is "hanging on" in England — and doing a right good job of it.

Golf, along with everything else, is feeling the effects of the austerity program. Gas rationing, while long since over, had its effect in reducing the number of golfers and with the Persian gasoline jitters facing them petrol is high and they talk of it going higher — to maybe four shillings.

London has probably one of the finest transportation systems in the world, but even this can not make up for the lack of auto transportation.

There are about 70 public golf courses in England. About 14 are in the London area — that is not enough. Birmingham has six and its population is far less than London. Liverpool had three, but two were plowed up for food production. One is being restored to ease the congestion there where during the long summer days more than 500 golfers play on Sundays.

Green fees on the courses around London are more or less standardized — and cheap by American standards. Daily green fees run around two shillings for 18 holes or about twenty-eight cents. The rate for all day is 3 and 6 — 49 cents. On Saturdays, Sundays and holidays it is at its highest — six shillings for the day — or 85 cents.

Play on the London area courses is not heavy, even at that cheap price. On good holiday or week ends many of the courses consider it a good day when they run 200 golfers through the starter house. On week days if they run 100 players they are content.

Caddy cart rates are the same as green fees in most cases, so for a Sunday round a dollar American will get you your place on a course and give you a caddy cart. Lunch will cost you 4 and 6 — or sixty-three cents.

These rates may seem ridiculously cheap by American standards, but in relation to the income of the people they are relatively the same as ours — and course operators do not have the investment tied up in their golf course construction or maintenance as do their American brothers. The irrigation systems and water costs are heavy in America. They do not have them in England.

The real pinch of the present program in England is being felt by the great middle classes. The rich and the poor are always

with us and always seem to be taken care of, but the so-called white collar worker is having his economic hazards to get over. It is from this class that public golfers come, so the going is tough.

Country clubs are feeling the tax squeeze terrifically, and again this year their request for a reduction in taxation on land and improvements was refused by the Labor Government, so there may be more country clubs available for operation as public fee courses — if one is brave enough to try.

County Councils Save Courses

However, there is one comforting aspect of this situation in the manner in which County Councils (municipal government) have been stepping in to save golf courses. Recently an exclusive country club near London, in dire financial state, was purchased by the Council and leased back to the country club — thereby saving the golf course for all time. The same arrangement is under way to save another club in the same area. Both will be leased back to the country club on a rental basis and not thrown open to the public thereby not being in competition with the hard-put public courses.

There is an unknown quantity in these operations. Two in fact. One is the British people's ability to fill these golf clubs and keep them self sustaining. There is a redistribution of wealth now going on in Britain, and the money is being drained away from the rich country-club set and moving down to the laboring man. One question is, will the laboring man, who has never had sufficient money or leisure to play golf, use his new money to play golf.

The other unknown quantity that is worrying golf course operators is a growing tendency on the part of the British male to quit competitive sport and go in for spectator sports. Attendance at sporting events is on the increase. Participation is dropping. The assumption is that the laboring man for the first time has money to buy tickets to sporting events he never has been able to see and is flocking to them rather than taking part in more sports. If this becomes a permanent thing the golf business may get tougher.

Golfing Societies Good for Golf

The one saving grace in the English golf picture right now is the golfing society. These groups have been in existence for

many years. They operate much as our golf clubs at public golf courses — being groups of golfers bound together by a commercial, club or fraternal tie, who play on various golf clubs. They usually have a home course and in that capacity operate as a public links golf club in America — but they travel more.

In groups of from 20 to 200 they charter buses and visit other golf clubs, stage a tournament there, eat lunch and have a gay time. This added business is welcomed with open arms by any public golf course operator and the country clubs really get out the plush red carpet for this added business. It is a grand thing, both for the members of the golfing society, who are getting to play on the famed golf courses, and the cash register of the hard-put course operator and club secretary.

While green fees on public golf courses are low by American standards, so is membership and initiation fees at country clubs. At one of the better clubs near London annual dues run around 15 to 20 pounds a year, roughly \$75.00. Many others around the three guinea figure which is around \$10.00.

Courses Far Out

The golf courses around London range from about 12 miles from downtown London to around 50 or 60 miles to the ones far out which try to get golf trade from metropolitan London. Hill Barn is 58 miles from London — a good 90 minutes by the fast train. Hollingsbury Park, Brighton, Sussex, a famous course built in 1908 and liked by far traveling public golfers, is 53 miles from London, or roughly an hour by fast train. This is about as far out as Londoners go for their public golf. But even a trip to a relatively close in golf course is a problem. First you have to add to the train time the time needed to get around and across London by underground or bus. By the time you do this and reach the golf course you've spent almost a half-day in getting just to and from your golf course.

Typical Trip to Course

A typical trip is one to the Addington Court Public course, Addington, Surrey — one of the best public layouts. You are living near Russell Square which is almost down-town London, so you take the bus to Victoria Station where the trains run about two times an hour, maybe three times during crowded periods. You won't have to wait long for your fast train to East Croydon which is the first main stop after you leave London. This takes about a half hour. Then, you catch Bus 130 marked for New Addington. After you get off at Gravel Hill Garage station you start walking up Featherbed Lane toward the golf course. They will tell you it is a short walk — but there are no short walks in England. This one is about a four-hole walk up hill to the club house — and all five pards!

So, you play your eighteen holes and then repeat the performance and get home. And as the British say "you've 'ad hit."

The Addington golf course is operated, by the way, by the Hawtrees. Fred Hawtree is a well known golf architect who was associated with J. H. Taylor for many years. He is now a member of the Golf Advisory Committee, chairman of the public course organization and president of the greenskeepers group. In a semi-retired capacity he, with the able assistance of his son and daughter, operate the course.

In looking over data on public golf in England you may run onto one of the most interesting statements in existence on the theory of municipal golf green fees. The statement is found in the rules and regulations of Chapham Commons, a golfing society founded in 1873.

The statement reads: "Being on a public commons, it is, of course, open to any member of the public who may choose to use it, but, owing to the expense to which the club is put to provide playing facilities, it will be understood that some annual charge must be made and this is regulated by year according to the number of members subscribing."

With that theory of establishing green fees still on the books the low green fees are understandable.

Yes, things are getting tighter on the "tight little isle" and the hazards are terrifying but, "There will always be golf in England."

COMING TURF EVENTS

- Aug. 7 — Turf Field Day. Rutgers Univ., New Brunswick, N.J.
- Aug. 22-23 — 20th Annual Greenskeepers' Field Days. University of Rhode Island, Kingston.
- Aug. 27-31 — American Society of Agronomy Annual Meetings, Pennsylvania State College, State College, Pa.
- Sept. 5-7 — Turf Field Days. The Pennsylvania State College and USGA Turf Advisory Committee, State College, Pa.
- Sept. 10-11 — Turf Field Days. Purdue University and Midwest Regional Turf Foundation. West Lafayette, Ind.
- Oct. 7-9 — National Turf Field Days. Beltsville Turf Gardens, Plant Industry Station, Beltsville, Md.
- Oct. 24-26 — Turf Conference. Central Plains Turf Foundation and Kansas State College, Manhattan, Kansas.

Pros Exchange Stocks to Reduce Inventories

A high rating of club pros as retail merchants is justified by the way they're handling two difficult merchandising problems. One problem is that of late season selling and the other is that of moving an abnormal amount of golf playing equipment bought when the war situation contained the possible threat of curtailment of club and ball manufacture.

With the lesson of World War II shortages fresh in mind most of the pro buying, in excess of normal, was caused simply by a desire to assure continued play. There wasn't much of a cash speculative angle in the buying, which would result in getting the pro in wrong with his members and risk his job.

GOLFDOM has received reports from representative first-class businessmen in pro golf on the present merchandising situation. This information follows.

Orville Chapin, Ft. Wayne (Ind.) CC advises:

"I am a conservative buyer and from my records I get a pretty good idea of the sets of clubs, dozens of balls, shirts, bags, etc., I will be able to sell. So I never go hay-wire in buying.

"I did lay in a stock of clubs, bags and balls for almost two years last fall but with the war situation I felt justified in doing so. And I had the money to pay for them and not be pinched. I did watch purchases where I felt that models might be changed.

"We have a table in the center of the display goods floor where shirts and hats are on display. There I put a 'close-out' sign on any merchandise that doesn't move and there always are customers looking for bargains.

"If my wife believes the shop stock has too many dresses she cuts the prices on them 20 per cent after Aug. 1 and sells them quickly.

"Most of my trade-in clubs go to caddies and former caddies who play at the fee courses. Now and then we have young members who are carefully staying within their means and we try to fix them up with good used clubs. I find that we gain considerable good will that way.

"My sales in July this year have been better than usual and part of this business is from steady work on prospects. My wife helps in the shop and is a fine saleswoman. She leaves the club selling to me but she makes notes on those who seem to be interested in buying new clubs and I follow up.

"I may have a bit too large inventory of clubs and balls but I doubt that they will be cheaper next year."

James D. Fogerty, Sunset CC, Sappington, Mo.

"Clubs I get as trade-ins I dispose of to my caddies. However, some St. Louis district private club professionals sell their trade-ins to professionals at public courses where there is a great demand for used equipment.

"I do not run any pro shop clearance sales because I feel that cutting prices is dangerous. First; when you begin to cut prices you invariably start a price war. Second; a professional must make a legitimate profit on his merchandise if he is going to be successful, and private club pros are expected by their members to maintain a standard price on equipment and to make a fair profit.

"Here in the St. Louis district the professionals are working together to reduce their inventories. When they are in need of clubs, balls, shoes, bags, etc., they telephone other professionals and pick up the necessary items. In that way they can get the merchandise and deliver it the same day. This allows them to give excellent service and at the same time reduce the district's over-all pro inventory. This plan is working to decided mutual advantage.

"I feel that we do not have to run sales at our clubs in order to do a good volume of business from Aug. 1 to Jan. 1, providing we:

"Check equipment in our club-cleaning racks and determine what condition our members' clubs, bags, head-covers, etc., are in. Then write a letter to the member advising of the condition and suggesting replacing old equipment with certain items of merchandise we have in stock. This is a service to members and stimulates sales.

"Conduct blind bogey tournaments using slow-moving merchandise as prizes.

"Send letters to members suggesting golf equipment as prizes and birthday gifts.

"Give assistants a bonus on their sales of clubs and bags."

The disposal of trade-ins, which is becoming more important as prices of clubs increase, is to a considerable extent to caddies. The lads are golf-minded, they've got a fair amount of money, they know bargains in golf equipment, and the pros want to encourage their play.

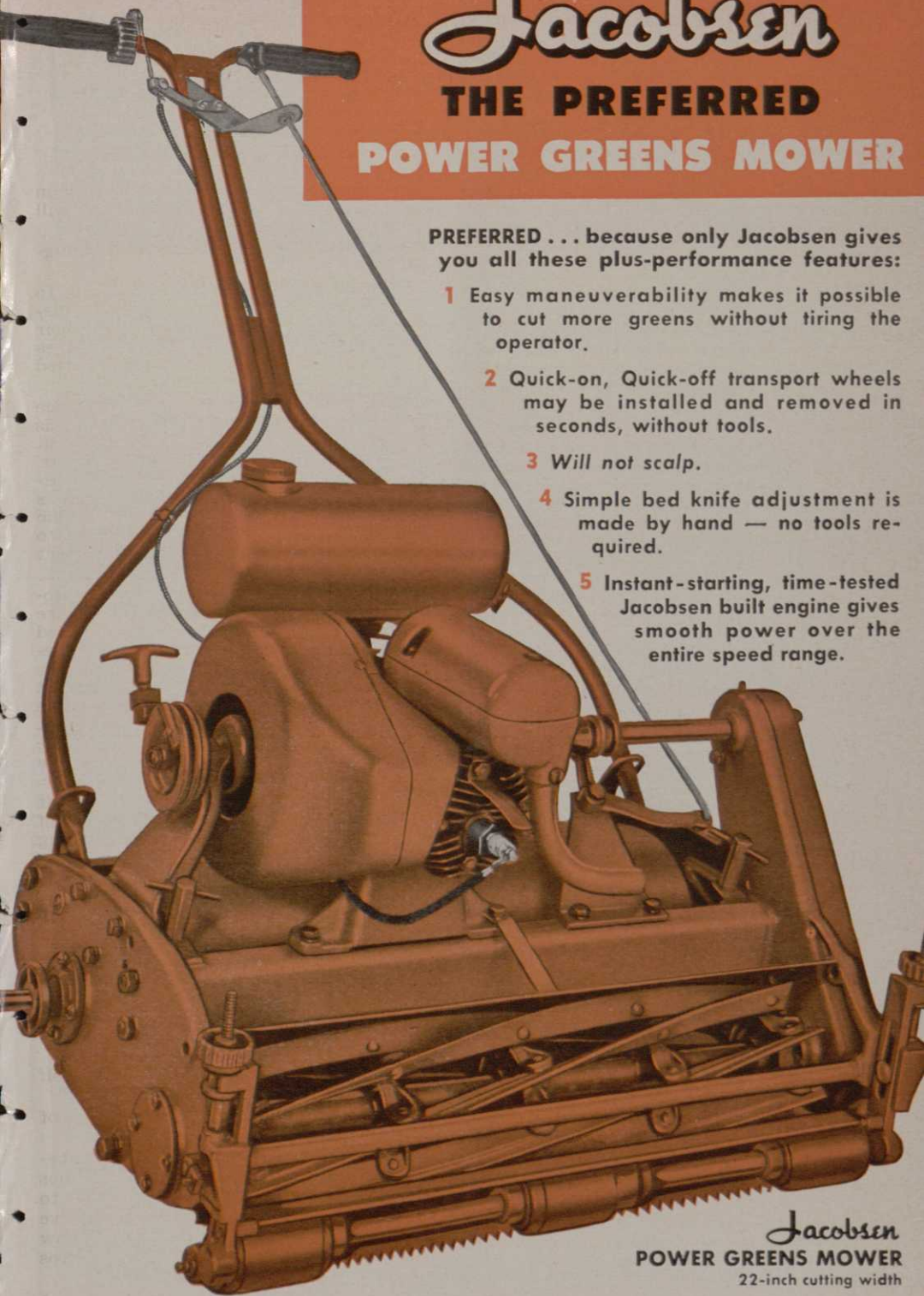
Arthur West, North Andover (Mass.)

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CC says his ex-caddies who now work at other jobs but can't afford new clubs, get most of his trade-ins. He says they look to him for something good. He adds that they have done him a good turn and he tries to reciprocate.

West says that late season tournaments, especially an invitation tournament at the end of September, enable him to sell a lot of balls. His week-end sweepstakes ball credits are good for credit up to Christmas.

Wint Christianson, Highland CC, St. Paul:

"I cut my usual buying several months ago. I have dropped several slower moving items and brands and will continue to do so until my stock is more in line.

"I re-ordered summer hot weather items in smaller quantities and that proved satisfactory as I got quick delivery this season. I'm not going to buy close-outs for next year selling, as I have done previously.

"In selling clubs lessons are by far the best club sales stimulant. Lessons are the easiest thing a pro has to sell. Here the season is so short it is impossible to do the lesson market full justice. I have found that getting the appointment into the book whenever I am talking lessons is highly important. Getting them started is something like getting a fellow to start at the dentist's. The patient needs it but is inclined to put it off unless a definite date is made. Then, after you get him started, you can give him more time when it's available.

"Sales for used clubs fall off much earlier than for new clubs. Any inquiry for used

clubs I list by name, telephone, type of clubs desired and price the buyer is willing to pay. It's very easy for me to dispose of used clubs, without interfering with new club sales, as the season opens, so I don't mind carrying over a few sets.

"I try to get the member to dispose of his own used clubs by suggesting that their children, some other relatives or friends would like to have the chance to play. I also used quite a few of the traded-in sets as rental clubs. I mark the rental clubs with colored Scotch tape to prevent switching.

"The price increase after we ordered last fall hurt, especially on public courses. Stocks also were upset by getting some items that had been on order 10 months.

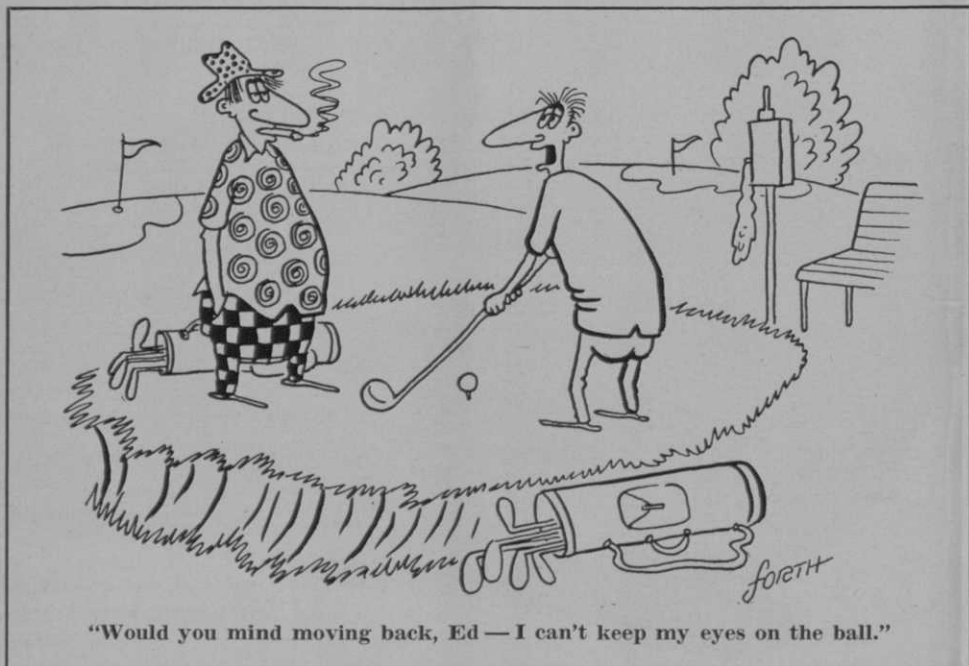
"The Twin City pros exchange clubs from their stocks when buyers can't find exactly what they want in any one shop, and that's helped to keep inventories down."

The exchange of items of shop stock between pros in various districts is getting to be a big thing in converting merchandise into cash from mid-summer on. In Chicago and some other districts manufactures' salesmen are active in promoting this exchange and getting their pro customers' stocks in good shape.

Frank Walsh, Red Run GC, Royal Oak, Mich., says:

"Our shop-to-shop exchange is working very well. I may take 25 shirts that have been on my counter for two weeks (and not

(Continued on page 67)



Creeping Bent Fairways Need Rough Treatment

By O. J. NOER

The turf on the best watered fairways in the North is all, or in large part, bent grass. Eventually the creeping types predominate and may become the only kind of permanent grass. Then frequent close cutting is necessary to keep a tight turf which is pleasing to play.

For fifteen years the watered bent fairways at Milwaukee Country Club were among the best on this continent. Except during the World War, they were cut three times a week at one-half inch or less, and were fertilized generously each fall.

During a bad hot spell in August, 1947, localized dry spots developed in the turf on sloping fairways facing the south. The spots were exactly like similar ones so common on many greens with heavily matted turf. The grass turned blue first, and showed footprints badly. Withering and death followed, leaving ugly spots. Examination disclosed a heavy surface mat of turf, with an accumulation of partially decayed stems and leaves of one-half to one inch thickness. The root system was very shallow and very inadequate in amount. Wilting occurred despite an adequate quantity of soil moisture below the top inch or so. Roots were too shallow and capillary movement upwards too slow for grass to use it. Light watering before noon and again in mid-afternoon would have kept the grass green and prevented loss of turf. Frequent light daytime watering was impossible because of the acreage involved, and the inability of the old water system to apply water quickly over large areas.

Fairways started to become green in the spring of 1948, but then the grass on the slopes facing into the direction of the prevailing winds turned brown and looked very dead. There was very little snow; the weather was dry and windy with no rain until late May or early June. It was a bad spring for evergreens also, they were severely windburned. The turf was still without a deep and extensive enough root

(Continued on page 74)

(1) Localized dry spot injury on a watered creeping bent fairway, facing South. The turf was heavily matted and shallow rooted. (2) Each September these creeping bent fairways are aerified to thin the mat and to promote the penetration of air and water into the soil. Aerification develops a deeper root system. (3) The surface of the fairway looks like this immediately after aerifying. (4) Soon after aerifying, a West Point Links Mat is used in the opposite direction to crumble the soil plugs. The crumbled soil acts as a top-dressing.



"TERSAN[®] keeps out brown patch and never shocks or burns our tender bent-grass greens"

says **ARTHUR ANDERSON**, *golf course superintendent at Brae Burn Country Club, Newton, Mass.*

"For twenty-one years we've had a turf disease preventive program at Brae Burn. We've used 'Tersan' successfully ever since it came on the market, to prevent brown patch. We spray every seven to ten days in hot, humid weather. 'Tersan' helps keep our fifty-year-

old greens as strong and vigorous as ever."

Mr. Anderson has a conventional power sprayer and also a proportional mixer for applying "Tersan" to the grass. For control of dollar spot, he uses Du Pont F-531 fungicide.

This picture story is another in a series of "experience reports" from well-known golf courses, coast to coast.



"SOME OF OUR FIFTY-YEAR-OLD GREENS contain Velvet Bent which is easily shocked by fungicides," says Mr. Anderson. "But 'Tersan' never burns or shocks our turf even when we use it double or triple strength."



BRAE BURN GREENS have kept their beauty for fifty years. Mr. Anderson keeps them in top shape for championship play by using "Tersan" every week in season.



Handier than ever is the new "Tersan" 75 in 3-lb. packages. It is measured, it is cleaner, and it stays in suspension for easy spraying. Two packages cover 9 average greens. The green color of "Tersan" blends with turf. Get "Tersan" 75 from your golf supply house now.

For exceptional control of dollar spot use Du Pont F-531 fungicide. Controls copper spot and pink patch as well. Special "Semesan" is also available for those who prefer a mercurial fungicide.

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Reservations Solve Tee Time Problems for Muny Course

By JIM MORRISSEY

When the reservation system of starting took hold on golf courses throughout the country, it looked as though a solution to the problem of weekend congestion had finally been reached. Golfers and starters felt that signing up during the week to play on Saturdays and Sundays meant that the two or three hour wait on the first tee was about to be eliminated. On many courses this has been the case, but on others the reservation system has been abandoned, or the golfers are not satisfied with it.

There is nothing wrong with the system itself. The trouble lies in the fact that many pros have not handled reservations properly. Since the system has worked out well in many cities there is evidence that reservations, if properly handled, are the answer to weekend congestion problems.

We experimented with reservations at the Bonneville golf course in Salt Lake City four years ago, and after we overcame the early problems the idea became so popular that few golfers would think of going back to the old, first come, first served, system. The main reason for our success was that Professional Dick Kramer and City Commissioner Fred Tedesco outlined a four-point plan and insisted that it be followed — without exception.

No Telephone Reservations

The first thing they ordered was that there were to be no telephone reservations. Many courses take reservations over the phone, but this is the main reason for the failure of the system in many places. A Seattle golfer summed up this weakness recently when he said, "It's enough to make me quit the game. Every time I try to make a reservation for Sunday morning it is the same story — nothing until noon. I even got up before the sun one Monday morning to make a reservation for the following Sunday morning, and the course was all booked up. I know that a couple of hundred golfers did not call before I did. It is just too easy for these guys to play favorites when they take phone reservations."

At Bonneville we overcame this problem by making the golfers come out to the course and pay their green fees before making a reservation. In this way we accomplished two things. Since the golfers have already paid they are more likely to show up at the right time and thereby avoid de-

lays on the first tee over the weekend. The second asset of this system is that the golfers know that there is no favoritism in taking reservations. If they come out to the course at 8 o'clock Monday morning they can be assured of getting the time they want. We do not permit the golfers to register for the next week when they play over the weekend because we want to insure everyone an equal chance to reserve the more popular times. If we permitted weekend golfers to sign up from week to week, others would not have an equal chance to play at the more desirable times.

At first it was hard to sell the golfers on this idea. They felt it was unfair to expect them to make an extra trip out to the course, but after the first week they realized that the 15 minutes spent making the reservation was much better than two hours wasted around the first tee over the weekend. Many golfers now sign up on their way to work, and others take care of this when they play during the week. This, incidentally, has helped to boost our week-day play.

On Tee Ahead of Time

The second requirement of Kramer's system is that the golfers be on the tee ready to go one minute before their starting time. This proved to be a big headache. The first day we used the system the first five foursomes ran off smoothly. But when number six came up on the register the tee was empty, and we had to send someone else out. About five minutes later the golfers showed up, but we had to tell them they were out of luck. This was an unfortunate incident, but they were on the tee ready to go ten minutes ahead of time the next week. We had a lot of trouble with tardiness during the introductory period of reservations at Bonneville, but today such occurrences are practically unheard of.

Another technique we employed helped us to send out players who did not have a game until the last minute. At the end of each eight foursomes we set aside a seven minute "starters' time." Usually this time is taken up by the fact that we have trouble getting each group off the tee and out of the way of the next group. However, if we are able to keep the players moving we can send out another foursome made up of lonesomes or twosomes during this time and make a few more golfers happy.

This is especially helpful in the case of