

The Maximum Golf-Playing Membership that a Club Should Have.

In response to an inquiry concerning the desirable number of members for a golf club, a questionnaire was sent in April of this year to all the Green Section clubs. The questions were as follows: How many holes has your course? What is the total club membership? Approximately how many members play golf on the course? Do you consider the number of golf players using the course too few, about right, or too large? From the answers received the following information is compiled.

	9-hole courses.	18-hole courses.	27-hole courses.	36-hole courses.
Number of clubs submitting answers--	92	173	8	3
Average club membership-----	258	458	888	1,068
Minimum club membership-----	60	100	390	675
Maximum club membership-----	540	3,104	2,000	1,780
Percentage of playing membership to club membership:				
Average of all percentages-----	57	65	79	70
Minimum percentage reported-----	14	11	52	53
Maximum percentage reported-----	100	100	100	80
Number of clubs reporting maximum--	7	8	2	
Clubs that find the playing membership too small:				
Percentage of such clubs to the number of clubs reporting-----	16	16	0	0
Average for such clubs of the percentage of playing membership to club membership -----	46	55		
Minimum percentage of playing membership to club membership-----	14	22		
Maximum percentage of playing membership to club membership-----	100	100		
Number of clubs reporting maximum--	1	1		
Average club membership of the clubs reporting the playing membership too small -----	188	338		
Clubs that find the playing membership too large:				
Percentage of such clubs to the number of clubs reporting-----	20	14	0	33
Average for such clubs of the percentage of playing membership to club membership -----	54	75		53
Minimum percentage of playing membership to club membership-----	20	21		53
Maximum percentage of playing membership to club membership-----	80	100		53
Number of clubs reporting 100 per cent (maximum) -----		2		

Average club membership of clubs that find the playing membership too large -----	350	510		1,780
Clubs that find the playing membership about right:				
Percentage of such clubs to the number of clubs reporting-----	64	70	100	67
Average for such clubs of the percentage of playing membership to club membership -----	61	65	79	79
Minimum percentage of playing membership to club membership-----	20	11	52	78
Maximum percentage of playing membership to club membership-----	100	100	100	80
Number of clubs reporting 100 per cent maximum -----	6	5	2	
Average club membership of clubs that find the playing membership about right -----	248	466	888	712

Several of the clubs, in answering the questionnaire, commented somewhat at length on the playing membership problem. These comments are as follows:

"It is my belief that the limit of club membership practical for an 18-hole course varies so greatly under different conditions that the only way to arrive at a correct adjustment is to start the membership low and work it up gradually to a point where the course may be comfortably filled, but not overcrowded. Our club is a country club with a resident membership of 350 and a total membership, of all classes, of between 450 and 500. While the bulk of the membership plays golf, there are also many who are interested only in tennis, riding, and social activities. With this membership constituted as it is, our 18-hole course is used nearly to the limit of comfort. On the other hand, the writer is familiar with another country club whose organization and interests are precisely similar to our own, but which has a membership of over 1,000 and whose course is no more crowded than our own. This latter club is situated in a more puritanical locality than our own and play is well distributed throughout the week. It seems to me that it is practically impossible to say what the golf-playing membership of any club really is, for the degree varies from those who play golf every day to members who play golf once or twice a year. I believe also that the location of a club and the quality of its membership has much to do with the case in point. Clubs which include in their membership a large proportion of men of leisure or those who have command of their own time are used constantly during the week, while clubs made up of active business men are apt to be crowded on Sunday and very little used during the week."

"We have six classes of active members, besides our honorary members. The active members are classed as follows:

"REGULAR MEMBERS.—Limited to 399 in number. Annual dues, \$125. Full privileges to play golf at any time.

"CLUB MEMBERS.—At present limited to 75 in number. Annual dues,

\$100. Privileged to play golf on any days except Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays.

“HOUSE MEMBERS.—Limited to 100 in number. Full privileges of the club house without any golfing privileges.

“NONRESIDENT MEMBERS.—Having their place of business or residence more than 100 miles from the club house. Annual dues, \$50. Privileged to play golf at any time.

“ASSOCIATE MEMBERS.—Limited to 50 in number. Restricted to members' sons and daughters between 18 and 22 years of age, women over 21 years of age, clergymen, and officers of the Army and Navy. Annual dues, \$50. At present privileged to play at any time but subject to future restrictions in case the board of governors decides that the course is too congested.

“JUNIOR MEMBERS.—Restricted to members' sons and daughters between 12 and 18 years of age. Annual dues, \$20. Privileged to play golf on any days except Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays.

“The above plan in general was gradually developed in order to give more persons an opportunity to play golf and also to increase the revenue of the club and therefore to reduce the cost per member. It is our belief that an 18-hole course could accommodate this number of members subject to these restrictions even though the proportion of playing members is as great as it is at our club. With the use of starting time arranged for in advance at certain hours at the 1st and the 10th tees, both of which are near the club house, we have found that we can make provision for playing that is generally considered reasonably satisfactory.

“Another phase of the situation is this. The club and house memberships constitute a preferred waiting list to the full privileges of the regular membership. When a man applies for membership, if he resides in the district, his application is for house, club, and regular membership. He is first elected to house membership, and in due course is promoted to club membership, and then to regular membership. A few men, it is true, wish no more than house membership, and some wish to go no further than the club membership; but these are exceptional.”

“I understand that what you want is a general reply, and that is all the questionnaire provides space for furnishing; but I believe that the problem needs some further elucidating and I would say that each club having a 9 or 18-hole golf course is more or less a law unto itself as to how many members it can accommodate, because the percentage of playing members will vary according to the individual club, and also the question of adjacency and accessibility has a strong bearing. In the case of a large city, like ours, if the club is 5 miles out it can not comfortably accommodate as many members as if it were 10, 20, or 30 miles out. The factors of distance and ease of accessibility make a big difference. If the club is close in, a man will play say three or four times a week; if it is far out he may just make it a week-end proposition or perhaps just once during ordinary week days.

“Our club has the most active daily attendance of any club in the state,

partly due to the fact that it has 36 holes, but, comparing it with 9- or 18-hole courses in the vicinity, it has a greater daily attendance on the course due to its being close in. Players can leave their offices down town in the long days of the summer anywhere between 3 and 5 o'clock, and play 18 holes before sundown. The result is, that a player who is a busy man can conveniently play three times during week days while he might be unable to play at all if the distance were 30 or 40 miles.

"Ordinarily speaking, the average club can accommodate somewhere between 300 and 400 members, depending on the percentage of active golfers in the club.

"The question of finance attaches to this subject, and in many cases is an inseparable one. It would be an ideal situation if the average golf club could maintain itself within the bounds of reason on a membership of 250, as this would make for greater freedom from congestion and for greater enjoyment; but few clubs can get along, particularly around large cities, where land values are high, except by charging very high annual dues or levying assessments. Frequently a club having an up-hill fight to maintain its existence on the basis of a reasonable charge for dues, would be able to get along in fine shape if it could add 50 or 75 more members. As before stated, the financial status of a club can not be overlooked in considering the question of total membership.

"The average age of the membership also has a bearing on this subject. If it has a high average age, the playing just naturally becomes less active. If it has a low average age, playing will be intensive.

"Around large cities this topic is a real live one, on which a book might be written for those thoughtfully inclined."

Dominion Reports Golf More Popular.—The following interesting news item has come to our attention: "Ottawa, Canada, June 7.—A report compiled by the Dominion of Canada Bureau of Statistics shows that on May 1, 292 golf clubs were flourishing, representing an outlay in property and equipment of nearly \$10,000,000. The unusual popularity of the game is illustrated by figures which show that in 1916 there were only 76 golf courses in the Dominion. Last year there were 218, so that the increase since the first of the year has been 74. It is also interesting to note that 81 of the courses are 18-hole layouts, while 211 are 9-hole links."

Tiger-beetle harmless to turf.—Numerous holes about one-quarter inch in diameter have been noticed recently on putting greens in various parts of the country. Near the holes are small pellets of earth. Close examination has shown that some of these holes are occupied with the larvæ of the tiger-beetle. The tiger-beetle lives on other insects, but so far as known does no damage to vegetation.

Volume I of *The Bulletin* (1921) has been reprinted and may be obtained in one cover for \$2.25.