

THE SENIOR'S GOLF CHALLENGE

by

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The opinions expressed herein by Dr. Bassler, a member of the Westchester Country Club, Rye, N. Y., are presented as a matter of general interest. They do not necessarily reflect the official opinions of the USGA.

"YOU WILL HAVE to give up playing golf," said the doctor, "because it now would take more out of you physically than you can get back in health."

Up to recently, Jones felt fine for two days after a round of golf, but lately he got very tired before the round was over. After a round, his leg muscles pained so deeply that he did not get over the pain and the tiredness for several days. The fatigue toxins that seized him made him want to rest a great deal for several days, much more than seemed to be necessary. His breathing tightened on exertion, and he became jumpy and irritable for no good reason.

The fact was that his age was taking its inevitable toll, even without having had an illness. Yet, before he started, he felt able and wanted to play the game he had enjoyed for fifty years, but it was not until he had played a few holes that this feeling of charging ability began to wither and finally he became painfully aware that it seemed he could go no farther. He used to be able to walk up those hills and on that long hilly eighteenth hole he went up with sprightly step and chest out. Now it was a painful struggle.

There are not many men at three-score-and-ten who have the physical stamina to play golf with comfort. Many younger than he cannot do it at least more than once or twice a week. As the study of members in the locker-room will prove, golf is not an "old man's game." The older men you used to see around on week-ends have gradually disappeared and, unlike "the soldier who never dies," he gradually fades away unhappy, and dies



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the sooner because he gets no exercise. From the club he had helped establish and maintain for many years, he gets no special consideration.

Most Popular Outdoor Game

Golf club organizations owe the older men an obligation even if many of the young fellows, who commonly are poor financial assets of the club as compared to the older member, feel that the oldsters should give up the game. Golf is probably the most played outdoor game of any. In the ages of its members today, it is going through a most important transitional period. The population of senior citizens

has increased four-fold in the last twenty years. As in the subjects of health, contentment, peace of mind and a justification for continued existence, modification in the game of golf will have to forego many of the old traditions of the past. The teaching of geriatrics is more and more accepted as the normal order, and things are changed accordingly.

But a full round of golf takes at least three hours, during which the actual swinging of a golf club comprises only ten or fifteen minutes of the time. This three or more miles of walking and climbing hills is too much exercise for most older people, especially when taken only once or twice a week. It is not uncommon for people to die on the golf course. Of course they die in bed, too, but not from the acute effects of exercise on the heart muscle or blood vessels. That exhaustion figures in such cases has been definitely established, because most of those stricken get "hit" on the last few holes of the round due to having become exhausted.

Old age should not be a curse, and is a far different thing from senility. There are many members over the age limit, and even in the seventies, who should play some golf. Preparation should be considered now for the inevitable increase of old people in the next twenty years. This brings up the question as to what should be done to meet the changes in age of our members so they can play golf longer and with benefit instead of harm to themselves.

The two things that suggest a worthwhile change are the use of the golfmobile and to shorten the game of golf to less than eighteen holes. The golfmobile is being used more as time goes on. A number of courses in the South, Southwest and Northwest are using them more and more. Being used when the course is not crowded, a round of golf can be played in a couple of hours with a minimum of physical exercise. It permits a full game of eighteen holes, allowing for both social and tournament play. Often more than eighteen holes may be played without too much strain.

Objection to the golfmobile's use has been raised, in that play is speeded up so that the front players are pushed and back players are on top of the foot players ahead. Others object to the looks of them on the golf course and their running around from side to side, as well as "picking up" wet grass with the wheels. All of these points are poorly taken and are more particularly the criticisms of young and vigorous men, and the opposition of members of the Green Committee. As time goes on, more and more of these carts are being used, and the demand now is quite an insistent factor.

Cost of Play Increases

Unfortunately the cost of their use has increased the cost of a game of golf, which today is much more expensive than it should be. The cost of a golfmobile or its rental, the charge for the batteries, etc., makes the cost approximately ten dollars a round. Most clubs demand that a caddie also be employed, so it makes golf a costly affair indeed. However, unlike the automobile, the cost of the luxury of a golfmobile will keep their use down so they will not be a nuisance on a golf course.

The next item necessary for the retention of senior members is that some type of tournament or game be devised, such as nine or 12-hole tournaments. It would seem that special tournaments could easily be provided. Or a special age rule could be allowed, say for persons over 70 years. To make this possible, the ninth and eighteenth holes should finish somewhere near the club house. Where this does not exist and, if not possible, "cutting in" would have to be arranged for instead of having the prohibitive rule on all players.

Age must be regarded as a period of opportunity no less than youth, even though it be in another dress. This, then, is one of the major challenges of the mid-twentieth century in golf.

Every yesterday should be a dream of happiness, and every tomorrow a vision of hope. Look well, therefore, to this day. Such is the salutation of the dawn.