

# Planning a Playing Program

By A. C. GREGSON

[Chairman, Golf Committee, Lido Country Club]

[We have had so many enquiries as to how the interest of members of golf clubs can be stimulated—and then maintained—that Mr. A. C. Gregson, chairman of the Golf Committee of the famous Lido Country Club, was asked to give some practical thoughts for the guidance of fellow chairmen of Tournament Committees who are grappling with this important problem. Within the past two years Mr. Gregson has done some remarkable work at Lido, having succeeded in keeping the members on the move and meeting fellow members in their class under competitive conditions.—Editor]

WHILE Lido has a fairly active membership, interest was not as keen as it could be in tournament and competitive events—a condition I understand prevails in many clubs. We felt, however, that competitive play was desirable for three reasons: (a) A golfer should be able to meet the strain and thrill of competition, whether he is a first-class player or one of lesser ability; (b) General competitive play is a great aid to the Handicap Committee through the cards turned in; (c) Competitions bring about a healthy condition in a club in that there is more opportunity for the members to meet in play a large number of their fellow members, instead of continuously playing in the same foursome and showing no interest in things outside that limited circle. Then, club interest prevents cliques.

With these points in view we set to work several years ago to find out why the existing schedule did not seem to meet with the desired degree of interest and what further could be done to stimulate interest. We found that for some reason qualifying rounds for the ordinary club competition had always been held on Saturdays—which was not our maximum attendance. Then the regular monthly events were all about the same thing — qualifying round—sixteen to qualify—and the usual eliminations at match play. This only permitted sixteen members to play each month. Nothing was scheduled for July and August, as it was assumed that everyone was away, and October was declared a winter month, except that the Club Championship might run over into the month, but that was a matter confined in interest to a very small part of the membership. In addition to these monthly events competitions were held: On Decoration Day, July Fourth, Labor Day, and Columbus Day. These were usually a net score affair or a Flag Tournament, which is exactly the same thing in another form.

The first move was to play all our qualifying rounds on Sundays or holidays so that everyone possible would be able to play. This proved most successful and interest increased at once. The next move was to try to offer something interesting every week—every Sunday from May 1st to October 31st. This permitted those who did not qualify in the monthly events, or had been put out, to find another opportunity for competitive play.

The weekly events were made up of competitions against par, —7/8 of handicap being allowed. This is an excellent game that holds interest to the end. One bad hole does not put a man out— even if he is down several holes to par he lives in hopes that others are likewise. Four-ball foursomes—we limit the difference of handicap of the partners to 10, and allow 1/2 the added handicaps of the side. The differences

of handicap should be limited in this type of play. Two-ball foursomes did not prove popular and were discontinued. We still have the old score-playing events, giving prizes for low gross and low net and sometimes giving prizes for low net for handicaps 18 and under and, also for handicaps of 19 and up. Once a year as an extra event, usually a Flag contest—but this is not included in our regular schedule, holding it for a special event. We have two 36-hole medal play events each year. This is an excellent test of scoring ability.

To maintain interest in the 36-hole event we have a selective competition—a prize for the best 18 holes selecting the best score made on each hole during the 36. This sustains interest in trying to better bad holes of

the previous round. When a holiday makes a two-day combination possible, we have selective score events spread over the two days allowing scores in any completed 9 holes to count in selecting the best holes played. This keeps everyone in hopes over the two days. Occasionally we have a Kickers' handicap or blind pool. In the holiday events we usually have an 18 holes putting competition on the putting course. Approaching competition—usually approaches for three distances, say, 75, 125, 175 yards, and gives a prize for the nearest at each distance, —on this we allow 1/6 handicap so that everyone has a chance. Driving competition—the prizes sometimes given for the longest drive on the course at a certain hole during play—sometimes for the longest drive of three attempts, ball to remain on the fairway or within marked limits. One other form of competition we always have — The Ringer Contest—best scores on each hole for the season, ending October 31st. In this event we allow 7/8 of handicaps so that everyone has an equal chance and it is not an event for the special benefit of the few crack players.

Last year this event was tied for by one man with a 19 handicap and another with 7. By the way, in playing off a tie for the Ringer we let them play it out on medal play full handicap as the

fairest method. Another interesting event in the Club Championship, where the interest is usually confined to a very few members. We arrange a triple championship: (1) The Club Championship for players with handicaps 1-10 for which we qualify eight, (2) Class B. Championship for handicaps 11-18 for which we qualify eight, (3) Class C. Championship for handicaps of 19 and over for which we also qualify eight.

We give a gold medal for low gross and a gold medal for the winner of the Club Championship. A silver medal for the runner-up; a silver medal for the winner of Class B; a silver medal for the winner of Class C. We have more hard matches in Class B and C than we do in the premier event.

As to the time of holding the championships we have tried spring and fall and have about decided that for the future around June is best, as most of the members are playing in New York then, and all are in full swing with the new season. In July and August a large part of a New York membership is away.

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## SPECIMEN TOURNAMENT SCHEDULE

[Made up by A. C. Gregson for Lido]

### MAY

1—Qualifying round, May Trophy. Best sixteen net scores to qualify.

*Trophy for winner, match play.*  
*Prize for low net qualifying round.*

Ringer Tournament, May 1st to and including October 30th, 1927. Post best score on each hole and change score as you improve previous score. Have each score initialed by a member. Seven-eighths of handicap at time of play to be allowed.

*Trophy for winner.*

8—First round match play for May Trophy.

15—Eighteen hole handicap match vs. par.  
*First and second prizes.*

22—18-hole Kickers' Handicap.  
*Prize for winner.*

26—The Lido Club Spring Invitation Tournament.

29—Eighteen hole, *selected score*, medal play handicap. Any hole made this day to count if made in a round of nine holes or more.

*Trophy for winners in Class "A" and "B."*

30—Thirty-six hole, *selected score*, medal-play handicap. Any hole made this or previous day to count, if made in a round of nine holes.

*Trophy for winners in Class "A" and "B." (No one to receive more than one prize.)*

An approaching-putting contest will be conducted during the two days.

*Trophy for first and second best scores.*

### JUNE

5—Qualifying round, June Trophy, eighteen hole handicap; sixteen best net scores to qualify.

*Trophy to winner, match play.*  
*Prize for low qualifying.*

12—First round match play, June Trophy.

19—Eighteen hole handicap, match vs. par.

*Trophy for winner. Second prize if many play.*

26—Eighteen hole handicap medal play.

*Trophy for winner. Second prize if many play.*

### JULY

3—18-hole handicap vs. par.  
*Trophy for winner.*

4—Second annual round for J. Bruce Robertson Cup. 36-hole handicap, medal.

*Low net wins leg on Cup.*  
*Prize for low gross.*

Approaching and putting contest during two days.

*Prize for winner.*

16—Eighteen hole qualifying round, July Trophy. Sixteen best net scores to qualify.

*Trophy to winner, match.*  
*Prize low net qualifying.*

17—First round match play, July Cup.

24—Two-ball foursome, 18 hole medal play, deducting one-half aggregate handicap of partners. Difference in handicap of partners must not exceed twenty strokes.

*Prizes for the two winners.*

31—Eighteen hole handicap match vs. par.

*Prize for winner.*

### AUGUST

7—Harry Messenger Cup. Qualifying round, sixteen best net scores to qualify.

*Prize to winner of match.*

15—C a d d i e. Tournament, medal play. Two classes, under and over sixteen.

*Prizes for low scores in each class.*

23—O n e Day Invitation Tournament, Long Island Golf Association.

Ball Sweepstakes each Saturday and Sunday.

### SEPTEMBER

4—Thirty-six hole handicap medal play for Long Beach Trust Company Cup.

5—Eighteen hole *selected score* handicap medal play.

Any hole made during day to count if made in course of nine hole round.

*Prizes for best net and for best gross (only one prize to one player).*

18-hole putting contest.

*Prize for best and second best scores.*

Six hole approaching contest (three balls on two holes).

*Prizes for best and second best scores.*

11—Qualifying round for September Trophy. Four best net scores to qualify.

*Trophy to winner, match.*  
*Prize low net qualifying.*

18—18-hole handicap vs. par.

*Prizes for first and second best up on par.*

25—Eighteen hole, two-ball foursome; handicap, deducting one-half the aggregate handicaps of partners.

*Prize for partners making best net score.*

### OCTOBER

2—Qualifying round for October Trophy. Sixteen best net scores to qualify.

*Trophy to winner, match.*  
*Prize best net qualifying.*

9—First match round, October Trophy.

12—Columbus Day: eighteen hole kickers' handicap. Open to all visitors and guests.

*Prizes for first and second best net scores.*

16—Qualifying round for Club Championship. All play at scratch. Eight best gross continue at match for Club Championship. Best eight scores among players with handicap of eleven or more continue at match for Championship, Second Division.

Best eight among those with handicap of twenty-two or over continue at match play for Championship of Third Division.

*Cup for champion in each division.*

*Prize for runner-up in each division.*

30—Ringer Prize award.

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In addition to all the events outlined, we have a \$1.00 Ball Sweepstakes usually every Sunday— $\frac{2}{3}$  to the winner and  $\frac{1}{3}$  to the runner-up. In addition to this, we are going to give this year, from the Prize Fund, 8 golf balls to the winner of the sweepstake, and 4 balls to the runner-up on alternate Sundays.

A midweek sweepstake from Monday to Saturday will be an innovation this year. Entry fee will be the usual dollar and any member may enter as often as he cares to during the week. At the end of the week this will be divided  $\frac{2}{3}$  and  $\frac{1}{3}$  with 8 balls added for the winner and 4 balls for the runner-up, from the Club Prize Fund. We feel that this will give weekday interest. Guests eligible.

We always have one event to which members may invite a guest. One prize for visitors is given that day—usually a kickers' handicap—and one for members.

In mid-August we conduct a Caddie Tournament for the championship cup donated by the golf committee. We hold this on Monday—an off day. The boys are divided into two classes—one under 16 and the other over. The boys play in fours, and whenever possible a member scores for the caddies and acts as referee. The best score among the boys of each class is rewarded by a prize of \$10, and the boy making the best score is the Caddie Champion and has his name engraved on the championship cup, of which he receives a replica. Members donate spare clubs on this occasion and each boy is allowed to pick out one of these clubs in order of score. Balls and clubs to play are also furnished. I think this feature might be tried with advantage.

Like many other clubs, an annual Spring Invitation Tournament is a feature with us. The good players of the district, members of the principal clubs, and friends of members are invited to participate. These events interest most players as there are always several sixteens made up from the qualifying scores. An excellent Invitation Tournament can be given by a club by simply inviting friends of members or neighboring clubs.

The usual Invitation Tournament is a three-day affair—Thursday, Friday and Saturday. We have tried to reduce the event to two days by grouping the entries according to their handicaps into sixteens and eliminate the qualifying round, saving a day and playing the event on Friday and Saturday. We also tried the two-day idea for a Fall tournament, playing Saturday and Sunday. This arrangement permits play by those who cannot well get away during the week. As we haven't a large feminine membership, we do not have any extensive events for our fair members. Putting competitions for the ladies in which the members and relatives of members may play have proved particularly popular. Prizes sustain the interest. On these occasions we usually have a dinner and dance.

An extensive program costs about \$1,500 a season—even with careful buying. This includes an Invitation Tournament and a very large number of golf balls given for the Sunday and weekday sweepstakes. Eliminating these items, a very full schedule can be operated for \$750 yearly, if prizes can be bought right.

The usefulness of a prize is important. Prizes in the past were chiefly noteworthy for their uselessness. Lido members like things that they can use—silverware in the form of plates, dishes, bowls and baskets from the best makers that can be added to the family silver service—also watches, clocks, golf bags, traveling bags, flasks, hair brushes, etc. We try to please everyone in prizes as far as it is reasonably possible.