BARGAIN: $4-a-Year Golf

Rockford's muny course system keeps players happy while earning profit for parks

By Jack Fulton

ROCKFORD, Illinois, with 90,000 population, lies 85 miles west and a little north of Chicago. Long known as a principal furniture, machine tool and knitting center, Rockford is also becoming known as one of our leading "golf minded" cities. It has facilities to meet any purse and an interest in golf unusual for a town of its size.

Eight golf courses are available. There are three 18-hole private courses—the aristocratic and reserved Rockford Country Club (established 1899); the up-and-coming, well-entrenched and extremely active Forest Hills CC (established 1922 during the height of the golf boom) and Mauh-Nah-Tee-See CC, which started in 1928 and is coming along very well in spite of the tough sledding it was hardly ready to face during the Depression years.

Rockford has little daily-fee play, due mainly to the excellence and adequacy of the city's municipal golf facilities. Although there is a 18-hole fee layout, the Macktowner GCse, a few miles away, Rockford golfers do not patronize Macktowner very extensively, preferring their own three municipal layouts—Sinissippi (9 holes, built in 1914), Ingersoll (18 holes, built in 1920), and Sandy Hollow (18 holes, built in 1930).

Bargain Golf Brings Volume

Credit for Rockford's golf-mindedness must go to these muny layouts, which compare in sportiness, maintenance quality and interest with many private links, and to a park board, of which Earl F. Elliot is superintendent, which has established as its golf policy the giving of as much golf as possible for the least money. That this policy works is evidenced by the fact that in 1939 (and in a town of 90,000 population, mind you) there were 121,400 rounds of golf played over the park courses. Play is up at least 20 per cent this year and with average weather from now on, there is good reason to believe 150,000 rounds will be chalked up as 1940's play-volume.

Play is granted non-permit holders on payment of 50c for 18 holes and 25c for nine holes. Supt. Elliot says that just about half the income from the muny courses comes from these fees. In 1939 the total round-fees collected amounted to $10,421 as against $10,065 received from sale of permits.

Allow Advance Registration

One other source of income for the park courses is from fees of 40c a foursome collected for advance registrations on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays. Starters at the courses are supplied with registration sheets with space to write in the names of 12 foursomes; since Rockford starts
players off at 5-minute intervals, each registration sheet covers one hour's time. Advance registration is permitted for every other foursome, between which are the times open for players who come to the course without starting times. From advance registrations, Rockford added $699.60 to its muny golf income last year.

**Coupons Give Control**

Rockford has worked out a system of control, both over registration fees and permit abuses, that is pretty nearly foolproof. Heart of the system is the scorecard which contains a numbered detachable coupon to be signed by the player, retained by the starter and turned in at the end of the day. Each day, the starter must check in, to the park board offices, a coupon for every card issued by him. Cards for permit holders are white, and for round-fee patrons are colored, a different color for each course. The starter must turn in receipts equal to 50c (or 25c in the case of 9-hole rounds) for every colored score card he issues. All cards cross check against the player registration sheets, on which scorecard serial numbers and players' names must appear.

Use of white cards for permit play and colors for fee play gives control over the starters and eliminates the temptation for them to hold back fees and allow pay players ostensibly to be playing on a per-

mit. The golfers are the ones who keep things above board—they all know that a white card means permit play and that if they have paid a round-fee, they should be given a colored card. So they refuse to accept anything but a colored card if they have paid to play.

The coupons also give control over permit abuses. First of all, each coupon carries the player's signature, which the park board compares the next day with the player's signature obtained when he applied for his permit. Should any irregularity appear, the holder is forced to give up his permit and cannot regain it without applying to the park board offices with an adequate explanation. For flagrant violations, permits are revoked; for less serious offenses, the park board may withhold a permit for 30 days.

Statistics on municipal play-volume for the past ten years, as supplied by park board records, indicate that Rockford, like all other municipalities, felt the effects of the depression years. But it is interesting to note that play volume is climbing.
toward the banner record of 1931, when 153,400 rounds were played. This year should see that figure equalled or passed. Annual figures on municipal rounds of golf over Rockford’s 3 courses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>lake 1</th>
<th>1935</th>
<th>lake 2</th>
<th>1936</th>
<th>lake 3</th>
<th>1937</th>
<th>1989</th>
<th>1938</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>134,000 rounds</td>
<td>91,700 rounds</td>
<td>147,700 rounds</td>
<td>107,900 rounds</td>
<td>105,100 rounds</td>
<td>119,200 rounds</td>
<td>100,600 rounds</td>
<td>105,100 rounds</td>
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<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>153,400 rounds</td>
<td>95,000 rounds</td>
<td>147,700 rounds</td>
<td>107,900 rounds</td>
<td>105,100 rounds</td>
<td>119,200 rounds</td>
<td>100,600 rounds</td>
<td>105,100 rounds</td>
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<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>147,700 rounds</td>
<td>107,900 rounds</td>
<td>119,200 rounds</td>
<td>105,100 rounds</td>
<td>119,200 rounds</td>
<td>100,600 rounds</td>
<td>105,100 rounds</td>
<td>105,100 rounds</td>
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<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>147,700 rounds</td>
<td>107,900 rounds</td>
<td>119,200 rounds</td>
<td>105,100 rounds</td>
<td>119,200 rounds</td>
<td>100,600 rounds</td>
<td>105,100 rounds</td>
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The three courses are maintained in excellent condition and the terrain over which the courses are built makes for sporty, interesting golf. Sandy Hollow’s greens, in particular, are said to be the finest in the Rockford district.

Maintenance costs for 1939, according to Supt. Elliot’s records, ran:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Costs</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ingorsoll</td>
<td>$7,088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shady Hollow</td>
<td>7,888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simmnsipi</td>
<td>4,816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$19,682</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since income for this period was $21,785, Rockford’s many courses returned a profit for ’39 of $2,103. Elliot cautions, however, that only course maintenance is charged against course income and that new equipment purchases and replacements of present equipment are paid for out of the general park funds. The $2,103 is of course turned into the general fund and doubtless covered or came close to covering the year’s equipment purchases, so that Rockford’s municipal golf can plainly be rated as self-sustaining.

How Southern Greensmen Meet Their Special Course Problems

By John Budd, Pro-Supt.

Tallahassee (Fla.) CC

As a general rule in the South, the Bermuda grass on the greens is playable from about June 1 to November 1. From November 1 to June 1, Italian rye grass usually makes up the putting surface. Naturally in some of our Southern localities these dates would vary.

Let us consider Bermuda grass first, because it is our most important problem. Bermuda, being a running grass, has a tendency to become rank and thick, giving a grainy green. That is to say, the blades all bend in one direction. This makes it necessary to topdress and mow your greens with extreme care so that a true surface will be maintained. By rotating the angle of cut on the green with the putting green mower, you can reduce the grain of your greens. If the grain becomes too rank in your Bermuda grass, try the method used by Fred Haskin at the Columbus (Ga.) CC. He takes a heavy stable broom, or stiff brush, and brushes the nap of the green so the mower will trim it off smooth. He says this can also be done with a scratch rake, but more care is needed.

Howard Beckett, Capital City CC, Atlanta, Ga., is very exacting in his topdressing methods. He keeps on hand a supply of soil, mixed, screened, and ready to use, so it may be placed on his greens at a moment’s notice. In this he uses a good percentage of sand. In topdressing a green his men smooth the soil out very carefully before it is dragged into the grass, finishing with an absolutely true surface. I have found that plenty of sand, yes, even 60% sand, in the topsoil is very useful. I like to have sand that will almost cut your hands if you scrub it between your fingers, and that will keep the surface loose and free from packing.

Good Topdressing Pays

George Picard, pro-greenkeeper at the Charleston (S.C.) CC, has always maintained that golf greens are no finer than the topdressing which is being used. He says, “Spend plenty of money for good topdressing and be careful in putting it on, and you will have good greens.”

Fred Haskin, by the way, has been one of the few men in the South to use peanut shell, well rotted, as a topdressing material. This substance gives him a spongy surface with plenty of humus-like material around the roots of his grass. However, peanut shells have to be rotted for more than a year if they are to satisfactorily