

Short Golf Course, Inexpensive Community Recreation

By GEOFFREY S. CORNISH

SHORT golf courses are becoming important recreational facilities in many communities, under private ownership, in limited park areas and at summer resort hotels. Fortunately only a small acreage is required for this form of golf and almost every community in the United States and Canada has not one but several desirable locations.

When one watches play on a short course he cannot help but note the fascination the game holds for both experienced players and beginners, old and young alike. Columnist Bill Moiles of the Worcester Massachusetts Telegram reports a typical reaction. Having played Little St. Andrews, a floodlit approach course on the Boston Worcester Turnpike, with Mrs. Moiles he writes:

"This thing was a revelation to us. Time was and a dim and distant time it now seems when we were fanatically devoted to miniature golf. This place on the Turnpike isn't quite miniature yet it isn't quite full size. It's in between. We felt the old madness.

There was part of a moon shining down and we found the whole operation sort of stimulating. May be the means of getting us out in the night air more than we have since we moved into the city. We may even get a plaid hat and who can tell what we might do to par."

Two weeks later he again wrote:

"Slowly, gradually, at times almost imperceptibly we are edging into golf with all its subtle joys and frustrations. It is much too early to tell whether this will be a good thing or bad thing.

... we have come along so well with our pitching and putting at Little St. Andrews out on the Boston Turnpike that we actually had a hole-in-one on the 12th there last Friday night.

We are thinking of adopting Gene Sarazen's style. We already have his hair-line, so that's sort of a beginning right there."

Mr. Moiles' experience expressed in his whimsical remarks is typical of thousands who are finding a new pleasure through short golf.

Having talked with many of the patrons at several recently installed short courses in New England, I have been impressed by the fact that a remarkably large number of people never before had the opportunity of playing golf. Often this is due to lack of facilities, but even when facilities do exist introduction to the game is not always easy. Playing on a full length course without previous instruction particularly when it is crowded is embarrassing for many people, and some who have tried it with little or no knowledge of the game and no one to help them have given up in despair and lost interest.

The atmosphere of a short course on the other hand is entirely different. The shorter distances give the beginner confidence and he does not feel that he is holding up experienced players unduly. Also an instructor can quickly range the entire area giving helpful hints to all in difficulty. Under these circumstances beginners take quickly to the game and often graduate with confidence to longer courses. Since most short courses provide necessary clubs and balls the newcomer has the opportunity of learning something about the game before he invests in his own clubs — a contributing factor in the popularity of short golf.

Young couples are barred from many forms of recreation by the universal baby sitter problem. Mrs. Lawrence S. Dickinson, wife of Professor Dickinson, well known turf expert at the University of Mass., suggested the happy idea of providing supervised children's play areas in conjunction with short courses. When ground is available adjacent to the clubhouse, these areas and the necessary supervision can be easily provided at little additional cost. This opens up the game to an age group particularly interested in outdoor recreation.

There are several types and lengths of course that can be built on limited acreage to appeal to practically all age groups and to all degrees of golfers. Two such courses built in 1952 represent different styles and serve different purposes.

Resort Hotels Need Golf

The first of these is a 1000-yd. 9-hole course at the Oak n' Spruce, a popular resort hotel and sports lodge at South Lee in the Berkshire Mountains of Western Massachusetts. The problem at the Oak n' Spruce was typical of many hotels. An urgent need for golf was recognized and yet the building of a full length course was out of the question for less than 13 acres of land was available. Furthermore it was realized that while many guests would have had considerable golf experience a much larger percentage would be beginners.

A decision was made to construct a 9-hole short course calling for a variety of long and short iron shots, with holes varying from 35 to 180 yds. Natural features were utilized as far as possible and while some sand traps were constructed other hazards were created by shrub and tree plantings and curving roughs.

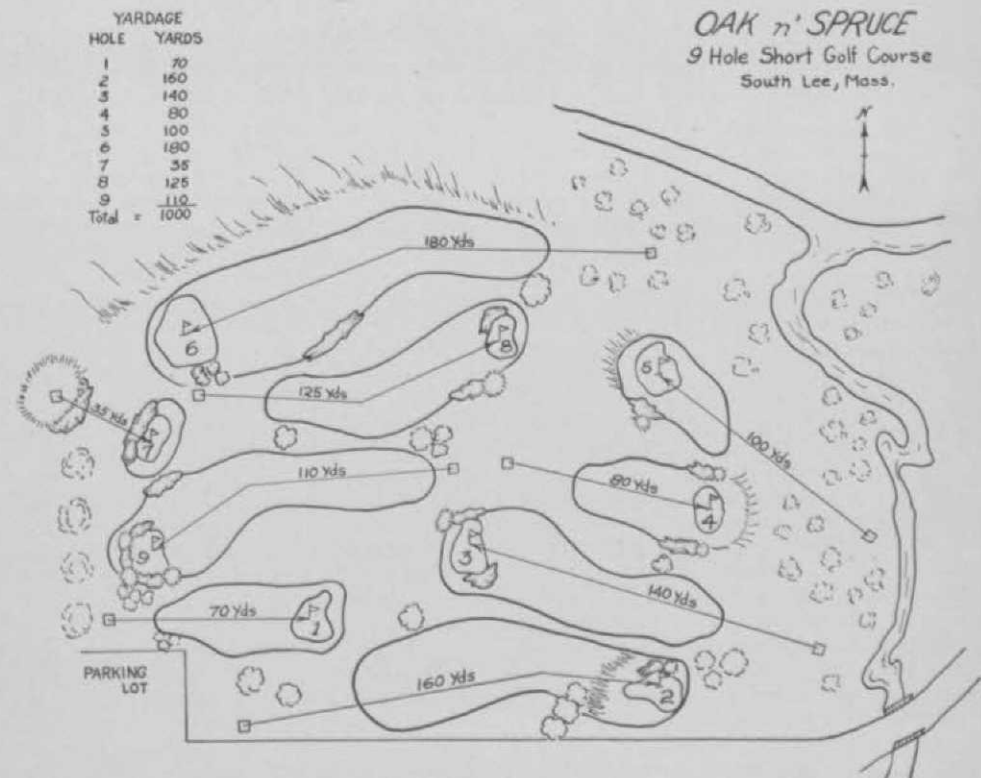
Construction was started in April. The entire area was in pasture land with a fairly level surface and a mixed bluegrass and bent turf. Hence no tree or rock clearing was required. Hay was removed by

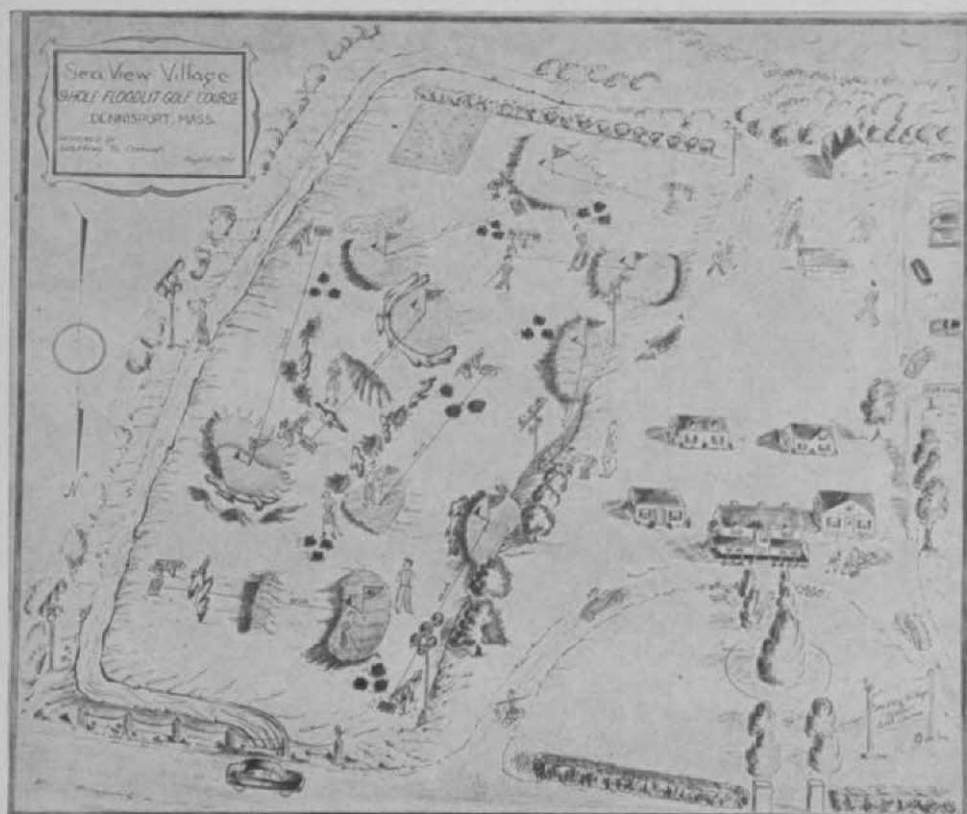
burning and the area limed and fertilized. No seeding on the fairway was necessary except in small areas damaged in green and trap construction. Handwork too was limited to removing a few humps and filling some deep depressions. Fairways were staked out and left clipped at fairway height while the roughs were maintained at four to six inches to become an important part of the strategy of the course.

Temporary greens were installed by leveling existing turf with topsoil, then liming, fertilizing and seeding with Colonial bent and red top. Play opened in June for hotel guests on these temporary greens which, incidentally, provided considerably better than expected putting surfaces. Later in summer the course was opened on certain days for people other than those from the hotel.

Clubs and balls were provided on an hourly rental basis. For the first few days only guests with previous golf experience played the course. A tournament was arranged for all guests and prizes were given. The tournament proved so popular that it was decided to hold one each Monday. It was soon found that many guests played

Layout of the 1,000 yd. Oak N' Spruce resort hotel course provides a variety of iron shots.





This short 9-hole course at Sea View Village has 27 lights for interesting night play.

several rounds a week in practice for the weekly tournament and the improvement in individuals' games was quite noticeable.

Vacationing golfers were able to enjoy a daily round on this course and many people were introduced to golf in a friendly atmosphere. Many people have a real desire to learn golf and would like to spend their vacations at a spot like the Oak n' Spruce where learning is made easy. The hotel owner and manager, Mr. Frank Prinz, reports that the course in its first season has proved to be a valuable addition to his property and is greatly appreciated by all his guests. Golf is a major feature on his summer sports program which also includes a wide variety of other games.

Construction Cost Low

The cost of building such a course is quite reasonable. In fact it is so practical most people do not realize that existing terrain can frequently be utilized to build attractive and interesting courses with a comparatively small capital outlay.

Items of cost include construction of greens, fairway and tee work, traps, tree planting, a greens water system, mainte-

nance equipment, course furnishings and playing equipment. The initial outlay can be trimmed considerably by using temporary greens for a season and financing in part the subsequent greens work from the first season's revenue. If a jeep or similar vehicle is already available it can be used to pull the fairway units. One man can maintain such a course.

Greens for Heavy Night Traffic

I designed and built a short course of another type at Seaview Village, Dennisport, Cape Cod, for the owners, Messrs. John Zinkus and Eddie O'Rourke. This course is typical of a number of floodlit courses that have been built in New England in the last few years and are proving to be great revenue producers.

The Seaview course is a 9-hole layout with 2½ acres in playing area opened to the public in June for day and night play. It is floodlit with 27 lights.

The land on which it is built was originally low and in some seasons quite wet. Since it was only a foot or so above sea level complete drainage was impossible and

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assistant. It shows evidence that the pro has executive capacity and spends time and thought training his team-mates. Any sales manager who gets the compliments from his customers about his salesmen that I do is lucky."

In a small room off Harry's shop is his office. "The most important place in the shop. There I can plan, think and do the paper work. It's the place where I get groundwork laid for proper action," Obitz says. "I make notes. That keeps me from letting some remark about what a man needs or wants being forgotten. That habit has helped me make many sales."

Over Harry's desk is a sign that is pretty much the key to his operations. The sign reads:

DO IT

If it's worth doing . . . DO IT!

If it concerns me . . . DO IT!

If it concerns you . . . DO IT!

If it helps someone else . . . DO IT!

If you like it . . . DO IT!

Even tho' you don't like it . . . DO IT!

And get it done . . . NOW

Not five minutes later.

Harry Obitz.

A lot of pro shops would increase business and player pleasure by adopting the Obitz policies and practices, "Now and not five minutes later."

SHORT GOLF COURSES

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fill was required. A few thousand yards were obtained from surrounding high land. On the inspiration of Mr. Zinkus additional fill was obtained by digging a moat 40 to 50 feet wide and about six feet deep around three sides of the course. This fill together with that from surrounding areas brought the general level up 2 or 3 feet above the old level with greens some 2 feet above this. The moat now filled with clear fresh water from a shallow stream that previously cut across the property makes a very beautiful boundary to the course.

Experience on other courses has pointed out the need for relatively large greens on a floodlit course and those on Seaview have been built accordingly. Another fact determined by experience is that greens on floodlit courses stand up much better under the exceedingly heavy traffic if great care is taken in designing each in relation to the following tee. While the design varies for each hole it is important that the green be so shaped that the pin can always be placed to encourage traffic to the next tee

to leave the green as soon as possible. Observation of this point at Seaview will save untold headaches in years to come in greens maintenance.

The main cost items to consider in building a short floodlit course are the greens, fairways, floodlights and wiring, water system, cabin, fencing, parking lot, course furnishings, playing and maintenance equipment. With careful design and proper supervision a high quality 9-hole floodlit course can be installed on suitable land for \$9,000 to \$13,000 and an 18-hole layout for \$15,000 to \$22,000. These figures do not include real estate. With ideal soil and terrain they can at times be substantially reduced.

Short Courses Are Money Makers

A short golf course is a profitable business. Space does not permit listing all the locations in which one might be built as a valuable adjunct to another business or as a non-profit recreational facility for industries providing employee recreational programs.

We know that a broad cross section of the population will play and enjoy short golf when facilities are available. Undoubtedly we can expect the development of a substantial number of these attractive installations in all parts of the country in the next few years.

ADVANCES IN TURF

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the primary cause of injury.

Leaf spot of the helminthosporium type was very bad on the greens at a club in western New York during May. No fungicide would stop it. Apparently the same thing happened in 1952 and made the greens bad for play. The turf was badly thatched and contained considerable Virginia bent. A test showed the soil to be very acid and low in available magnesium and potash. The greens were cross aerified, part of the grass removed with a Verticut, and dolomitic type lime of a high magnesium content was applied. The new fertilizer program included the more generous use of potash. These things helped the grass stage a comeback and enabled fungicide to perform as expected.

Fairy Ring New Problem

The fairy ring problem is a worthy one for somebody to study and solve because the rings seem to be on the increase in putting greens. As yet no quick cure is known. The causal organism resides in the soil and is of the mushroom type. This