

Keep the Ladies Interested

First and foremost, Leawood South Golf and Country Club, located in the fashionable suburbs of Kansas City, is a golfing club. The entire operation is anchored firmly to the game. And secondly, the idea since inception in 1967 has been to avoid letting it become a club where someone in management has to often say, "Let's go into a huddle and see if we cannot drum up something to whet the interest of the girls."

Women have embraced Leawood South with open arms almost from the time the club opened. The evidence that they have been drawn

into the fold is:

- Some 230 women play the course regularly.
- Pro shop sales to women are burgeoning.
- The junior girls' program is thriving.
- The annual spring fashion show draws about 150 women at both the 18- and nine-hole segments of the course. It earns appreciative plaudits from the women.
- Head pro Harold Reed attracts sizable numbers of women into the lesson program with no special measures. Individual and group

instruction are both popular. Reed has been the pro since the club opened and has always made lessons a prime focus.

- The Southgate Open, an annual Ladies' Professional Golf Association event, is held at the club.

- Women golfing celebrities like Sandra Palmer visit with Reed every year for problems with their game; they know he is a good game tune-up man.

With all this going for him with the women, it is natural Reed keeps thinking of them when it comes to planning pro shop activities, lessons, special promotions and other facets of the course. The course is noteworthy for its reputation in the area. The course and clubhouse were built as a companion to residential development of single-family dwellings and townhouses in the \$60,000-plus bracket. The entire development was built by Moffet-Kroh Development Co., and is still operated by it. It encompasses over 600 acres.

Designed by Bob Dunning of Tulsa, Okla., the course is said to be challenging, well-planned and perfectly conditioned. The back and front nines are as different as night and day; the back is heavily wooded and the front more open.

One feature of the course is its fine stand of bluegrass on the fairways; the tees are zoysia. Developer John Moffett took a personal hand in shaping the course. He is a dedicated golfer and ranks pro golfers Carol Mann and Judy Rankin among his best friends. "Water is our chief antidote for any bluegrass problems other courses in the area have," he told GOLFDOM. "We have an automatic watering system



Harold Reed, pro at Leawood South Golf and Country Club, Kansas City.

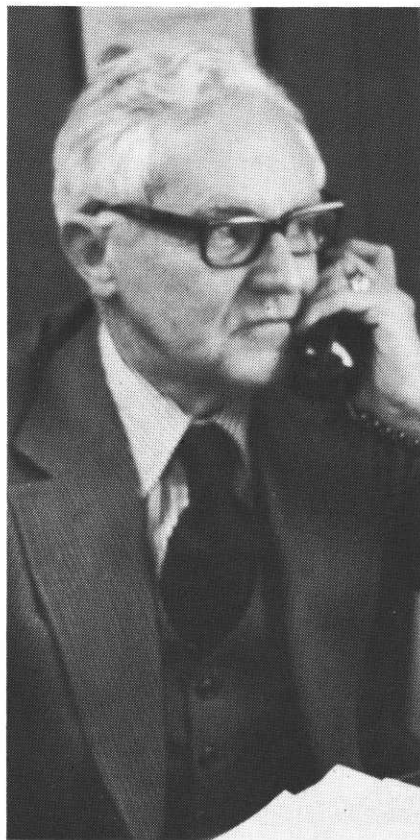
and our water bills run \$3,000 to \$4,000 during the season.”

Golf is the backbone of the operation but the social aspects are not neglected. Executive manager John McNelly sees to that. The club has 468 golf members and 138 social members. The focal point of the festivities at the club is a ballroom, seating up to 262 persons, flanked on both sides by the bar wing and the card-player's wing. Events such as “shrimp night”, a party featuring a sing-along and all the shrimp one can eat for \$5.25, attracts 175 to 250 members. Facilities include a 19th hole on the lower level, which is a snack-style operation. There is no main dining room. Instead, food for the main functions is catered. For outside functions, the ballroom is rented at a minimum of \$100, or \$1 charge per person. It gets constant use.

The golfing season is ushered in and out with “duffer's delight” events which include breakfast for \$3.75, complete with bloody marys, and noon luncheons for \$1.25 or \$1.50. On these occasions, the course is played by over 175 male members.

But the ladies never get left out. An example is the spring fashion show. Harold and his wife Joyce work as a team in staging this event along with the member committee. About 30 garments are modeled by members of the club, and the event lasts about two hours. Refreshments and cocktails are served. Culottes, shorts, slacks, etc. from six lines are shown. As for operating the shop, Reed is a firm believer in the value of arranging coordinated displays which may include a pair of culottes shown with matching blouse, shoes and perhaps a hat. He said this complete coordinated display frequently results in a sale of the entire outfit.

He said his shop is a full-line operation. One of his tactics is to drop a line that has been stocked several years and replace it with another. This has the effect, he explains, of infusing fresh new colors and styles into the stock. He is a firm believer in keeping new things coming into his inventory. “Any pro shop operator who expects to make it big with women first must accept the basic premise they are harder to



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sell than men,” he said. “They shop around more, check prices and are keen judges of style and colors, and they know what is new.

“We do a good job on high-end pant suits, culottes, blouses and shirts,” he said. “We do it because we have the kind of upper-income, discerning customer who buys fine merchandise. And because we put the effort in stocking and presenting high-end goods productively and tastefully.

“It is so essential for a pro shop manager to keep up with trends and to key on them,” Reed said. “Right now we have seen a switch on our course to women wearing more culottes instead of shorts, so we are offering a larger selection of colors, sizes and styles in that particular item. We do an awfully good job on culottes priced between \$18 and \$28 and a lot of our blouse and shirt sales average around \$12 and \$14. Some labels have better identification with our customers than others and we try to stock those with which our women identify more closely.”

Reed is also an excellent golfer, placing ninth in the last year's national senior tournament. He said, “We sell golf more than anything else. And almost everything good that accrues in all areas is a spinoff of the golf program. The fact that we enjoy brisk sales of clubs to junior girls checks back to our solid junior program. In the course of that program, we stress the need to fit the weight and length of the clubs to the individual and not to use mother's or dad's clubs which are usually too heavy. And not to pick up a set at a discount store where individual needs are entirely neglected.”

How good is the junior program? There are 125 young women in the program receiving instruction on either an individual or group basis. One of the prime reasons it is a good program is that Reed and his assistants Tim Lowrey and Gary Clark believe in a strong teaching program.

Reed teaches simply, stressing the basics of the golf swing. He feels there are many people giving golf instruction who have no business doing it because they never got the basics down themselves. Here, as at other clubs, one of the problems with juniors lies in keeping up their enthusiasm. The women's golf committee lends a hand in this area by making it a consistent practice to walk around the course with juniors and offer tips on their game. Their pep talks help keep the juniors interested.

Reed says that parents are a big influence on whether or not their children stay interested in the program. Too many of them, he feels, believe that one season of lessons is sufficient. “We charge \$10 for a season of lessons to juniors,” he said. “When we learn of a drop-out after only one season, we try to get with both the youngster and the parent and stress the way to becoming a good golfer is to keep learning, — indefinitely. I drop a few names of some of the golfers who profitted from this constant-lesson philosophy. This helps in a lot of cases. As result of our determination to keep juniors in the program, we have turned out more good golfers than many clubs.” □