



Camelback Country Club in Scottsdale, Ariz., is a Marriott resort.



PUBLIC COURSES, PART 2

RESORT REPORT

by David J. Slaybaugh, editor





The three photos above show dining, kitchen, and pro shop facilities at Marriott's Lincolnshire Resort. Assistant pro Henry DeLozier and head pro Roger Maxwell arrange the softgoods displays.

Silver Lakes, in California, is affiliated with a residential development and a lodge. The lodge owner also owns the golf-related facilities. Al Geiberger is director of golf.

Of all the types of facilities in the golf business, probably the most business-like are resort golf operations. We came to this conclusion after studying the results of the 1977 GOLF BUSINESS Profile of the Industry survey. The demographic analysis clearly showed that for the number of rounds played per year, resort golf courses were making the most money.

This statement is not made to downgrade other types of facilities, however. Private clubs have a limited market. Daily fee and municipal course operators have their own unique problems they must deal with, and they seldom have the capitalization that resorts have. Resort golf courses are probably more business-like in their operations because they often are Big Business: owned and operated by fairly large companies with diverse holdings and greater resources.

There is a lot to be learned from studying resort golf facilities, though, no matter what part of the golf business you're in. Their methods of promotion and operation utilize many techniques that can be readily adapted to your own club or course.

The resort survey

Because of the relatively small proportion of resorts among the respondents to the major survey conducted by GOLF BUSINESS early this year, the editors embarked on a research project specifically designed for and addressed to golf resorts.

From a variety of sources, we

chose 346 facilities readily identifiable as resort golf courses, then mailed a special questionnaire to the resort managers with a letter explaining the need for data on their industry. We received 116 usable replies, for a 34 percent return. As would be expected in a survey of resorts, the greatest percentage of responses came from the states of North Carolina, California, and Florida — which closely follows the geographic pattern of resort locations around the country. Arizona and South Carolina were also near the top of the list, but all parts of the nation were represented.

By title, the greatest percentage of responses came from general managers of resort facilities. This corresponds with the results of one of the questions we asked: "Is there one individual responsible for the overall operation of the resort facility? If yes, title?" Over 90 percent said "yes." Of those, 40 percent named the general manager as the head man, 17 percent named the president, 11 percent named the manager, and the others named a variety of titles.

The results

One of the main reasons — if not the reason — resort golf facilities have more capital to work with is that they usually have some sort of lodging or housing as part of the facility.

According to the GOLF BUSINESS resort survey, 63 percent of those responding have a private dwelling development (houses, condominiums, or apartments) connected

Half Moon Bay Links, 35 minutes south of San Francisco, finishes with this fantastic hole overlooking the Pacific. A 52-unit motel adjoins the golf course, as do private dwellings.

with the golf resort. Of those, 72 percent have the development under the same ownership as the golf course. The developments contain an average of 342 units.

Ninety percent of the resorts responding have a hotel, motel, or lodge as part of the facility, and 80 percent of those are owned by the owners of the golf course. With an average of 276 rooms per facility, these resorts have an occupancy rate of 82 percent in season and 44 percent out of season.

Of the 116 respondents, 28 percent allow anyone to play golf on their courses; the remaining courses are open only to residents or hotel guests — the former also qualify, therefore, as daily fee or municipal courses (many resort courses are run by park and recreation departments). At those courses combining hotel and golf

operations, an average of 55 percent of the guests play golf during their stay at the hotel.

Golf resorts do not average many more rounds of golf during a year than the combined average for all types of courses: 29,800 compared to 25,800. Indeed, the resort figure is low in relation to the 40,000+ average for daily fee and municipal facilities. But resorts take in considerably more revenue from golf — actually more than double. The 1976 revenues from green fees at resorts averaged out to \$155,799, while the average reported for all courses on the GOLF BUSINESS survey earlier this year was \$73,746.

This obviously is due to fairly high green fees. Our resorts' fees averaged about \$5.75 for 9 holes and \$9.00 for 18 during the week, rising to \$6.50 and \$10.00 on weekends.

Marriott's Lincolnshire: ultimate American resort?

For the world-weary vacationing golfer, Marriott's Lincolnshire Resort is the best of two worlds. On the one hand, it is in a secluded setting on a heavily wooded, 170-acre site bordered by the scenic Des Plaines River, and it encompasses enough to see and do, enough good places to eat and drink and play, that one need never leave until it's time to go home. On the other, the resort is just 20 minutes north of Chicago's O'Hare International Airport and minutes away from north, east, south, and west interstate highways.

In summer, Lincolnshire guests can play golf on an 18-hole championship course. Designed by George Fazio, it measures 6,611 yards from the blue tees, is rated 71.1, and has nine water holes. Fairly flat and not too heavily trapped, the course is playable for average golfers as well.

Green fees are \$9 on weekdays and \$10 on weekends, but lodging packages including unlimited golf are available. Use of golf cars is mandatory.

The pro shop is well-stocked and expertly run, as one would expect under the guidance of Marriott Resorts' pro Roger Maxwell. Lessons are available from the staff of professionals, and clubs and cars may be rented. The golf clubhouse also offers sandwiches and drinks at the Club House Bar.

Not all golf

Lincolnshire provides other sports for vacationers. There is swimming in indoor and outdoor pools; biking and hiking trails; sunfish boating, paddleboating, and



Golf cars

Another major source of income, especially at resorts, where their use often is required, is golf cars. Although the average age of cars at resorts is virtually the same (4 years) as at other courses, resorts have more of them (70, rather than 44).

In the pro shop

According to the results of the GOLF BUSINESS Profile of the Industry survey, 71 percent of the club professionals belong to the Professional Golfers' Association. According to this most recent survey, resort pros compare favorably — 75 percent of them are Class A PGA members. But although more pros (72 percent versus 61 percent) operate the pro shop at resorts, fewer of them (32 percent versus 54 percent) collect the profits. At 66 percent of the responding

facilities, the resort "corporation" collects the pro shop profits. That means a lot, too, since the pro shop is a major profit center at resort golf operations. Average revenues reported for 1976 by resorts amounted to \$120,615 — more than triple the overall national average of \$37,989.

Another major difference in resort pro shops is that almost 75 percent of the revenues reportedly came from sales of softgoods, whereas in a regular course pro shop the ratio of softgoods to hardgoods is close to 50/50.

It stands to reason that most vacationing golfers would not be in the market for a new set of clubs or a bag — they probably would rather buy them at their home club's shop or in a specialty store at a discount — but they could readily be swayed to buy a new shirt or pair of slacks, or even a

complete outfit. Smart resort pro shop operators cater to these tendencies by merchandising softgoods — keeping large inventories and putting up displays of a wide variety of styles and colors.

As Roger Maxwell, GOLF BUSINESS advisory board member and director of golf for Marriott's Lincolnshire and Camelback golf resorts, says, "I don't want anybody to be able to find our look in another pro shop. The majority of the people we deal with are affluent and belong to the finest country clubs back home. If we stock the same things that their home club does, we won't sell a thing.

"When someone walks into our shop and the displays hit them for the first time, they walk through like a child at a 51-flavors ice cream store. We have slacks in 51 colors. And for every pair of slacks we have color-

canoeing on manmade Lake Lincolnshire. Fishermen can test their expertise against bass and walleyes in one of the eight lakes dotting the resort.

In winter, guests can ski on a slope designed specifically for GLM (Graduated Length Method) instruction — during the day or in the evening. Rental equipment is available. Adjacent to the main lodge is an attractive ice rink.

Tennis can be played year-round at Lincolnshire on six air-conditioned indoor courts. Two USPTA professionals give lessons and man a tennis pro shop. The tennis facility also includes locker-rooms and a lounge.

Add to this men's and women's health clubs, exercise room, steam (for men) and sauna baths, hydrotherapy pools, shuffleboard, ping-pong, billiards, an electronic game room, and a gift shop and you have a pretty comprehensive list of activities for fun and relaxation.

Room and board

Lincolnshire's rustic three-story, Y-shaped main lodge houses guests in 400 rooms and suites. Many of them face the lake, while others overlook a picnic grove and the golf course. The usual modern hotel services are offered: color TV, big beds, message lights, etc.

Guests may dine in any of three restaurants or drink in a choice of three cocktail lounges. For evening entertainment, there is also the Drury Lane North Theatre, offering legitimate stage productions starring well-known actors.

For meetings, 18 rooms have capacities up to 2,000 auditorium-style and 1,250 for banquets.

In short, Lincolnshire provides just about everything people could want in a resort.



Marriott's Lincolnshire Resort covers a heavily wooded 170-acre site, includes 18-hole golf course and mammoth lodge. Fazio-designed course has railroad boxcar covered bridges.

coordinated shirts, sweaters, and shoes."

In the clubhouse

Food and beverage service is an even bigger profit center for golf resort operations. Those responding to our survey had average gross sales of food alone of \$920,245 last year. Ten of the respondents grossed over \$1 million on food in 1976, including four that grossed better than \$2.5 million. Compare those figures with the overall national average of \$141,536 for gross food sales.

Liquor brought in a substantial amount for resorts in 1976, too. The gross sales average was \$227,483 (compared to \$116,171 for all types of golf facilities). Beer sales added an average \$32,502; and wine, another \$10,089.

These great sales figures were not without considerable investment of capital, however. The estimated inventory value of the kitchen equipment at responding resorts averaged \$171,383 — almost three times the \$59,023 average value at all types of golf food services. Dining room furnishings and supplies inventory required capital investment, on the average, of \$105,467 at responding resorts — more than quadruple the \$24,840 inventory maintained at the average facility.

A large outlay of cash funds goes for personnel at resort food and beverage services, also, since our respondents employ an average of 40 full-time workers and 20 part-time workers in that department. (The average for all courses is 15 of each.)

On the course

The same goes for golf course maintenance, as resorts reported employing 10 full-time course maintenance workers and five part-time (compared to overall averages of six and four, respectively). Total course maintenance expenditures averaged \$168,035 (versus \$77,492 for all types of golf facilities).

Resort courses naturally cost more to maintain, simply because more of them have more holes of golf. Only 3 percent have just 9 holes, while 69 percent have 18 holes, 12 percent have 27, and 16 percent have 36 holes.

Averages for all types of courses are: 9 holes/35 percent, 18/56 percent, 27/6 percent, 36/4 percent.

And because resort courses are supposed to be the *crème de la crème* of golf, they have to be maintained in absolutely top condition. Fortunately for resort course superintendents, the money is available to do so.

Package your product

For those resort golf facilities who reported their figures to us, total facility revenues last year averaged \$2,253,162. More than 60 percent of the respondents took in more than a

“Promotion is one of the main reasons resorts do so much business, and packaging is one of their main types of promotion.”

million dollars in 1976. Promotion of the golf resort is one of the main reasons these people do so much business, and packaging is one of their main types of promotion.

A typical, basic golf resort package offers a golfer a hotel room for a set number of nights at a special rate which includes unlimited golf on the resort's course at no extra charge. Meals (all or some, such as lunch at the club) may or may not be included. Charges for golf cars, although use of them may be mandatory, are not always included — although many resorts will provide some free extras to make their packages special.

Common extras include transportation to and from the airport, club storage and cleaning, and a “welcome” cocktail. The Buccaneer resort at St. Croix, The Virgin Islands, also gives package-plan guests a golf cap, three golf balls, and a lesson with the resident pro. The Dorado Beach Hotel in Puerto Rico provides free

daily use of the driving range, including range balls, while the Doral Country Club in Miami throws in complimentary use of its tennis courts and a 3-hour cruise around Biscayne Bay on the *Island Queen*. Castle Harbour in Bermuda provides free videotape analysis of the guest's golf swing.

The secret, obviously, is to take advantage of whatever unique features your facility offers.

The famous Concord Hotel at Kiamesha Lake, N.Y., instituted a new business-building program this summer which could be adapted at many other facilities: a series of 10 weekly adult golf schools under the direction of resident pro Hubie Smith. The \$535 fee covers 6 days and 5 nights, including three daily meals, practice balls, club storage, green and golf car fees, welcoming cocktail party, awards dinner, and a Concord golf gift pack. Non-golfing spouses can come along for \$265.

One need not have overnight lodging directly connected with the golf course to take advantage of this type of promotion. Many hotels, especially in resort-type geographic areas, are eager to make arrangements with an independent golf course to provide package deals for their guests. □