

## PUBLIC COURSE REPORT, PART 1

# Daily fee facilities: the future of American golf

by Nick Romano, managing editor

Although an excellent example of America's free enterprise system, the daily fee golf course is something that has almost been ignored over the years the golf business has grown.

Whether others in other segments of the industry want to admit it or not, these public facilities are the future of the game and the business. Recent statistics by the National Golf Foundation show that 44 percent of the more than 11,500 golf facilities in this country are daily fee operations. That same study shows that 45 percent of American golfers — the largest single segment — are playing at those courses exclusively.

No doubt the market has shifted drastically in the last decade. The emphasis is off the private country club. Some have said the private club segment of the market is mature; others say it is stagnant. Again, NGF figures back the latter. Only about 16 percent of the golfers in the country play at private clubs, although those facilities make up 42 percent of all courses. Rising costs, escalating real estate taxes, higher wages, declining memberships, and growing social pressure to not be associated with private clubs all cloud the future of that part of the industry.

This article will focus on daily fee operators today. They come from all walks of life and all income brackets. Some, investment-minded, look at golf as just another way to channel their money. Some are devoted to their "business" full-time and get their entire families involved. Some were farmers who, after years of growing corn or raising dairy cattle, decided a golf course would be a better way to use their land.

But the identity crisis for the daily

fee facility seems to be finally ending. The Professional Golfers' Association and the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America are both actively pursuing this part of the market for jobs for their members. A recent survey by the PGA showed that currently only 24 percent of its membership is working at daily fee operations.

Associations outside the daily fee segment of the industry are having trouble getting access, but associations inside are not doing much better. Now in its second year, the National Association of Public Golf Courses, the brainchild of some innovators in the daily fee segment and the NGF, has fewer than 200 members and is still undergoing growing pains among its own varied and spread-out leadership.

This report will attempt to get inside the business. There are as many opinions about the future of the daily fee operators as there are public courses. Beyond everything else, the daily fee operator must be admired for his independence and ability to remain in business and consistently show a profit. Remember, unlike the private club and the municipal course, the daily fee operator must be concerned with the bottom line.

### What are the numbers?

Before you talk to the market on a one-to-one basis, it always pays to do some homework. GOLF BUSINESS did a lot of that, with the help of its research director, Dr. David Harmon. The editors went to work on assembling a profile for the daily fee course in 1976, and what we found was enlightening.

In the survey, it was realized a number of different management per-

sonnel could be answering the questions we put to them. More than 52 percent of the respondents answering were the owners themselves, while another 28 percent were facility managers.

Most of the courses responding, 53.3 percent, were of the 18-hole variety. Another 41.6 percent were of the 9-hole type, and 5.1 percent had 27 holes or more.

When asked how long their season of play was, the group corresponded for the most part with the geographic breakdown of the country and the amount of courses in those areas. Courses with a season of 5 months or less were 5.3 percent of the sample, while facilities with a season of 6 to 7 months were 46.7 percent, a season of 8 to 9 months were 23.4 percent, 10 to 11 months were 3.6 percent, and year-round were 19 percent.

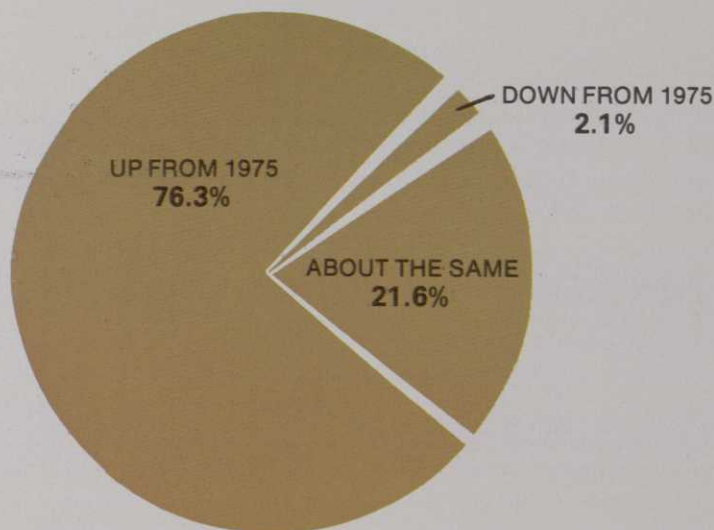
Just how much play is there at each daily fee operation? Our sample of courses came back with an average of more than 42,000 rounds in 1976. Average green fee for 18 holes of play was \$7.50, while a fee averaging approximately \$3.10 was charged for 9 holes.

Other types of sports facilities were also asked about. Nearly all of the operations (87 percent) had a pro shop of some type. More than 82 percent of the sample had golf cars. Some 35 percent offered club repair for their patrons. Less than 8 percent had any outdoor tennis, while the same percentage had outdoor swimming.

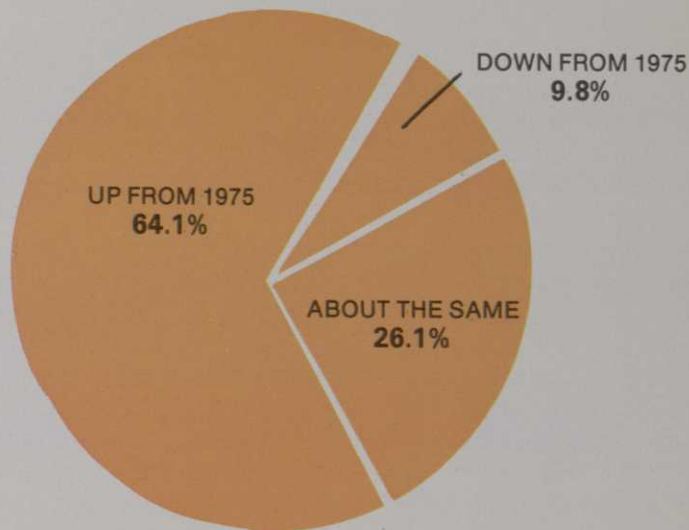
Gross revenues from pro shop sales averaged more than \$67,000, well over the average of \$38,000 for all facilities established earlier in the year by GOLF BUSINESS research.

Of course, the pro shop is not the only income generator for the daily

### 1976 EXPENDITURES



### 1976 REVENUES



fee course. Food and beverage service is also an important part of the operation. Nearly 80 percent of the sample had a snack bar, 42 percent had a bar, and 21 percent had a dining room. Gross revenues from food and beverage sales totalled more than \$31,000 for 1976.

About 66 percent of the courses own their own golf cars, while another 27 percent lease, and 7 percent do both. The breakdown on the percentage of gasoline cars exclusively on the premises (41) was about the same as the electric cars (43); the remaining 16 percent had some of each. Average fleet size for the daily fee course was 26 cars, lower than an overall average (44) for all facilities.

Golf cars at daily fee facilities are older than cars found at other types of courses. Average age of the daily fee car is 4.5 years, contrasted to 3.9 years for all courses. Gross revenue for car rentals was \$26,410, and the owner operates the car revenue concession alone at 59 percent of the facilities that responded to the GOLF BUSINESS questionnaire. The golf professional runs the concession at 21 percent of the courses.

Although "who operates the concession" is important, "who gets the profit" is probably more important. Nearly 73 percent of the owner-operators take all the golf car profits at their facilities, while only 9 percent of the golf professionals get the profits at others.

Course maintenance costs are high everywhere, but daily fee operators seem to keep this cost at a minimum. Average total expenditures for maintenance last year was nearly \$36,900 per facility, compared to an overall average of \$67,400 for all courses.

When questioned about the increase in overall expenditures for the daily fee operation: 76 percent said their costs increased from 1975, 22 percent said their costs held, and only 2 percent saw their costs go down.

Obviously, the daily fee operation is not all numbers. Interviewing a number of owner-operators around the nation, one soon sees that the daily fee operator is happy with his lot, is established in his community, and is sold on the future of the game (at least with the people who play on his course).

#### The businessman speaks

For the most part, daily fee operators interviewed by GOLF BUSINESS were satisfied with 1976 and looked to 1977 as another good season. Most saw their play increase from the year previous and this without much promotion. Besides general advertising in local newspapers and telephone directories, it seems most daily fee operators are not into the art of promotion and rely heavily on word-of-mouth marketing by their patrons.

Now in its 16th year of service, Den Brae Golf Course, Sanbornton, N.H., is a 9-hole facility operated by the Craig family. Some 27 miles from the state capitol of Concord, Den Brae is in a rural area and was bought by Ed Craig, a Scot who came to the United States in 1919.

"We are happy with our situation here," said son Alex Craig. "New Hampshire encourages privately owned recreation lands. Greenbelt legislation is in effect here and the daily fee owner gets a break." There are only three municipal courses in all of New Hampshire. Craig sees

this as the direct influence of the privately owned recreation operators in the state.

With a season averaging between 6 and 7 months, depending on the first snow, Den Brae also offers yearly memberships to the area golfer. A rate of \$110 is charged for singles and \$140 for couples. The combination there can be father-son, mother-daughter or husband-wife. These memberships offer unlimited play for the season. The area is resort-oriented.

Oddly enough, when the recession hit in 1975, Den Brae celebrated one of its better seasons. Play was up, since more people weathered the financial storm of that summer at home. "It was strange, but we sold more golf equipment than we ever had in the past," Craig noted.

The only criticism Craig had about the business was that it was somewhat tougher to handle membership customers, as opposed to daily patrons. "Their attitudes toward management tend to differ a bit from the daily trade."

Although a completely different operation, but with an accent on daily fee play, Jug End Golf Course and Resort, South Egremont, Mass., has been around nearly 40 years in the western section of the state. The facility draws many rounds to its 18-hole course from the surrounding area, but is attempting to attract guests to its 158-unit lodge from Boston, Hartford, New York City, Philadelphia, and northern New Jersey.

Owner Joseph Bruno, 42, bought the facility in September of last year and is currently into a major renovation project. "The golf business could be quite a costly move for me, but I am convinced that with the amenities we

offer here, people will come. Locally, we know we can attract golfers."

Turfgrass upkeep is a prime concern. Bruno has brought in a recent University of Massachusetts graduate to oversee course maintenance. Closest competition from municipal facilities nearby is in Great Barrington with a 9-hole facility.

With a large investment in land, Bruno is concerned about the tax situation in Massachusetts. "I'm hoping that the income from the project will offset the added burden the state will place on us."

Another family is making it in golf in Marcella, N.J. The Enholms have been involved with Green Pond Golf Club since 1937. Robert Enholm took over the 9-hole operation from his parents 10 years ago and gets full-time help from his wife Mary. Northwest of Newark in Morris county, Green Pond produced 60,000 rounds in 1976, a marked increase over 1975. "We draw people from Newark, 35 miles away. They would rather come up here and have a place to play, than to wait around on some of the courses down there," Mary said.

A lot of beginning golfers start out playing at Green Pond, since the facility caters to this segment, even allowing assignment of starting times on Sunday morning. With a season starting in March and ending in December, the operation does go after golf outing business, but never accepts any on Sundays. This day is heaviest for open play.

Like other courses around the country, the bite of taxes has been astronomical. "We've been hurt somewhat by two municipal courses near us. Both are 18-hole," Mary added. Most of the play loss has been in senior golfers, who play the municipal courses for a reduced rate.

Robert Enholm's pro shop is a moneymaker. There is not much competition from retail outlets selling golf equipment. Green Pond's emphasis is definitely on hardgoods. There are some softgoods sales, primarily shirts and sweaters.

#### More competition near city

In the metropolitan Philadelphia area, Malvern (Pa.) Golf Club is an 18-hole facility with 16 years of golf behind it.

Pro-manager Charles Schneider directs the operation, which boasts a season of approximately 9½ months.

Schneider was the original golf professional when the facility opened in 1961 and has been a PGA member for 32 years, practically all in the Philadelphia section. Besides Malvern, Schneider is a partner in four other daily fee courses, one in nearby Jamison, Pa.

"We try to attract the family man, the average golfer. Seniors seem to like our course," Schneider told GOLF BUSINESS. The statistics would tend to back that up with more than 45,000 rounds at Malvern in 1976. Admittedly, Schneider does very little promotion for the facility. There is

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some advertising in the local golf publications, but nothing extensive. Normally, outing business is rare and league play is heavy.

As far as municipal courses are concerned, there are several in the Philadelphia area, four or five that might "compete" for players with Malvern. "I wouldn't say that they injure our business," Schneider noted.

Assessments in Pennsylvania have gone out of sight in the last several years, according to Schneider. He told about one of the courses he is a partner in, Montgomeryville (Pa.) Golf Course, where the bill rose 222 percent in one year. Many of the owners in the state are up in arms about taxes. An effort is underway by the state owners association to establish tax easement for recreational lands.

Increases in taxes have subsequently caused boosts in green fees. Schneider remembered how charges for green fees were \$4.50 per 18 in 1962, while today those prices have gone up to \$7. Golf car rentals at Malvern are \$10 per 18 plus 6 percent for state sales tax.

Very little shop business is done at Malvern. Few sets of clubs are sold and softgoods sales are nil. Schneider keeps balls, gloves, hats, and some bags in stock.

One of the youngest course owners interviewed was 33-year-old Walter Nielsen at Nine Eagles Golf Course, Odessa, Fla. A native New Yorker, Nielsen got involved in the golf business three years ago. Knowing that plans were underway to develop homesites in a tract 20 miles outside nearby Tampa, Nielsen sunk his money into Nine Eagles.

Unfortunately, the recession hit and although the golf course was completed, the homes never really materialized. "It's been tough, but I plan to stick it out," Nielsen stated. Plans were in the works for a clubhouse for Nine Eagles, but that went by the wayside when the financial picture in Florida dimmed. At present, Nielsen is working the course out of a trailer.

Young working people and the tourist trade are the two primary groups Nielsen is trying to get at Nine Eagles and he is succeeding. Most players at the facility utilize part of Nine Eagles' 60-car fleet, because of the extreme length of the course.

Happy with the lot of the daily fee owner, Nielsen admits he is somewhat envious of the position of the municipal courses in the Tampa area. "I enjoy the golf business, but I really don't see a lot of big money in it. The game is getting too expensive for the average golfer. Something has to be done before a lot of golfers lose interest, due to the high prices on equipment, balls, fees, everything."

Florida is one of the few states in the union that offers greenbelt legislation to any great degree, but here also, Nielsen sees an obvious drawback. "I won't sign my life away for a tax cut. The law really doesn't help the daily fee owner," he said. What Nielsen is referring to is a clause in the Florida law that stops a course or club applying for the easement from taking advantage of the law unless it promises not to sell the land for at least 10 years. Otherwise, back taxes from the time to easement is granted to the time the sale is made have to be paid.

Considering his present situation,

Nine Eagles does very little pro shop business. Some equipment is out for display, but Nielsen stays with balls, gloves, and hats.

#### Down on the farm

A dairy farmer who grew tired of minding his cows, C. K. Blankenship built Bright Leaf Golf Course in 1963. His 18-hole facility in Harrodsburg, Ky., is a semi-private operation with a 12-month season. The course is part of a privately owned recreation area that includes three fishing lakes and a 36-unit motel.

Blankenship, 71, is a 22-year member of the Kentucky PGA section and a 25-year member of the Kentuckiana Golf Course Superintendents Association. He has had extensive experience in course construction with several built in California and more than 35 in Kentucky. "I really love working with turf," said the Kentucky native, "Guess I'll always be a greenskeeper."

Like most other daily fee operations, Bright Leaf relies on its customers to spread the word. Golf outings are a big part of the overall gross, some 20 percent. Blankenship is happy with the real estate tax situation in Kentucky and says the assessments are manageable. His biggest problem seems to be with golf cars. "You are always working to maintain them and keep the paths in shape."

Merchandising in the pro shop is not his forte. The shop sells enough to get by, but the inventory is not too large. "I've seen a lot of the private club golf professionals lose money around here. They carry way too much inventory," Blankenship commented. Even with that philosophy, Bright Leaf does a good effort in hardgoods, but stays away from softgoods, since Blankenship contends his customers aren't interested in this aspect of golf.

#### Below the Mason-Dixon line

Ten miles from Huntsville, Ala., in the small town of Toney is Bermuda Oaks Golf Course, a 9-hole facility with a 10-month season. Although Robert Prozan is the owner, Carol Waller, a 47-year-old former military man is the operator.

An executive with the Lockheed

Corp. in Huntsville, Prozan, 42, purchased Bermuda Oaks nearly 5 years ago as an investment. The course is a full-time job for Waller. Promotion is a key for profit. Since Huntsville is a relatively small television market, Bermuda Oaks has been able to get its message across through commercial spots during PGA Tour events. The 30-second spots cost \$100 each.

To supplement that, some ads are placed in local newspapers. Through local tournaments at the course, Waller is able to keep the course name in the news through the sports pages. Bermuda Oaks has been involved in sponsoring an event where the proceeds would go directly to the local chapter of the American Cancer Society. Along with this effort, junior golf is an important priority. Waller allows two local high school teams to regularly compete there.

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### **"Most courses are not financially well off enough to have three management people."**

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"Like a lot of daily fee operations, we are going after the working man. A guy with a family usually can't afford to belong to a private club, and we are the alternative," Waller told GOLF BUSINESS.

With more than 2 years in the industry under his belt, Waller admits he loves his job. "I've played for quite a while. I enjoy running the shop and I work well with our course superintendent." Competition from two 18-hole courses in Huntsville do not hurt rounds much at Bermuda Oaks. Waller does think that the daily fee owner subsidizing his own competition with his own tax dollar is a "rotten business."

Real estate taxes in Alabama have to be some of the lowest in the nation, according to Waller. There is very little hardship for the property owner. Still, there has been talk about greenbelt legislation, but little action.

If anything has played havoc with the course so far this year, it has to be

the terrible weather that plagued the south over the winter. Waller said that the frost line was as deep as 24 inches and Bermuda Oaks greens were just coming around in May, after the unseasonably cold weather.

As far as the pro shop is concerned at the Alabama course, sales are primarily in hardgoods, some 70 percent of the total gross sales. Waller is hesitant to handle softgoods, saying the investment in inventory is too great for him to handle. "We don't really merchandise as much as we should, but I try to set up attractive displays. I have relied a lot on the various golf equipment salesman that call on me," Waller added.

Following his 15th year as a PGA professional, Rob Landham finally had enough money to buy into a golf course. Along with his two partners, Jerry Lindy and David Brown, Landham took over Bigby Hollow Golf Course, Columbia, Tenn., early in 1977. Prior to the sale, Landham had been involved in a lease agreement for the 18-hole facility, situated some 40 miles south of Nashville.

As part of the overall plan, the course is surrounded by a residential development. Land is being subdivided around the 12-year-old course for homes. For its location, the facility gets a lot of play, more than 20,000 rounds last year. Increases in rounds continue steadily each year.

Landham, 35, is a vice president in the Tennessee PGA section and is convinced that promotion can pay off for the daily fee golf course. He works extensively to get more juniors involved in the game. Bigby Hollow is interested in attracting the player from Nashville. Landham has utilized the daily newspaper there to promote the course's special events.

"The business is changing as far as the professional is concerned," said Landham. "Professionals must be more business-oriented. In my view, most clubs and courses are not financially well off enough to have three management people. Pros must know all areas and meet the challenge."

Courses in Tennessee face competition from state-owned facilities. There are eight such facilities in all. In a way, these courses do take some rounds away from the daily fees,

but Landham thinks most owners are holding their own.

There has been some controversy in the past over the way the state operates the pro shops at their courses. The Tennessee PGA has been aggressive in attempting to convince state officials these jobs should also be made available to PGA professionals. So far, the state has not changed its position. Many of the people that do run these state shops are novices in the trade.

Taxes in Tennessee are getting higher. Landham says that assessments for Bigby Hollow have doubled in recent years. "Greenbelt would be nice, but there would have to be a constitutional amendment and I doubt that would happen," Landham noted. Tennessee has no personal income tax, so it relies heavily on real estate taxes for revenues.

Discount golf houses have cut into Landham's shop business somewhat and he is critical. "These places serve a price purpose, but service and the salesperson's knowledge of equipment is nonexistent. The game is tough enough for the golfer, without getting inept help at the point of purchase."

With a 12-month season, Landham tries to maintain a \$30,000 inventory at Bigby Hollow. He sees his shop as added bonus for daily fee golfers. Fees at the course are \$5 for 18 holes with a \$9 charge for a car during the same amount of play. There is also a year-round fee a golfer can pay: \$185 for a single person and \$250 for a couple.

After all his experience in the industry, Landham's biggest criticism is how those in management tend to hire based on how much an individual will cost, as opposed to how qualified the individual is. "It seems they look for who will take the least amount of money," the Tennessee native commented.

### Some happy, some not

Located in northeast Indiana is Hidden Valley Golf Course at Angola. Don Colbert is the owner and builder of the 10-year-old facility and admits he is looking to get out of the business. He told GOLF BUSINESS he was in the process of selling.

Even though his business has been good in the past, Colbert said he was

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## "If these taxes get any higher, I'll tear the course out and plant spinach."

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running Hidden Valley at about 50 percent efficiency. Angola is primarily a tourist area and Colbert relies on the transient trade to supply most of his business. After Labor Day, though, he practically puts the course to bed for the season.

Listing his problems, Colbert insists getting and keeping good help was his primary trouble. Cost of equipment is also rising. "In general, I think a lot of things have gone downhill in the last 10 years. The attitude of the public is bad. People do not appreciate a golf course anymore. I've had trouble with vandalism. That has been enough to make me think twice." He related the story of how when he first opened the facility in 1967, he only had a storm door at the entrance to his pro shop. Today, he has been forced to get into alarm systems and heavy locks.

Like other daily fee operators, Colbert shuns softgoods, stays away from a big club inventory, and sticks with the basics. For him, the inventory is just another headache to handle. The best thing in Don Colbert's mind right now would be to get a buyer for his 9-hole executive course and move to Florida.

Way up in northern Wisconsin, some 230 miles from Milwaukee is Maple Birch Golf Course, Tomahawk. At 58, William Ball has had the 9-holer for more than 20 years. Built in 1928, Maple Birch is a family course that also relies on tourist play to make ends meet. Ball estimates that approximately 35 percent of his play is tourist-related.

"We really don't promote the place much," Ball said. "There is some league play and local tournaments, but most of the folks up here know our course." Competition from municipal courses is light. Taxes seem to be the biggest dilemma for Ball. In the last 5

years, increases in assessments have gone up at least 10 percent.

Maple Birch has no real pro shop to speak of. There are six sets of different club models in the small "shop" area. Two of those sets are women's. If somebody wants something, Ball orders out of a catalog. They have tried softgoods at Maple Birch without much success. "I've seen a lot of local pros take a bath on softgoods," Ball added. "I'd like to see the companies offer more merchandise on consignment for the daily fee operator. They might get more business from us, if they adopted this attitude."

West of Maple Birch in the Twin Cities metro area is Country View Golf Course, St. Paul, Minn. Judy Mogren is the manager of two 9-hole par-3 courses on the facility grounds. She has been involved as a part-owner in Country View for the past 8 years, along with three other investors. One of the courses is 12 years old; the other, 8 years old.

Utilizing a season that usually lasts 7 months, Country View plays well. Mogren estimates there are 350 rounds on the weekday and 450 or more on the weekend days.

"We don't really do too much promotion. Business is steady," Mogren said. Country View does have an ad in the yellow pages and suburban newspapers distributed north of St. Paul, but nothing extensive.

If you asked Mogren what type of clientele they are trying to get at Country View, she would say that the average golfer would be its most frequent customer. The facility also includes a driving range. Some golf outings are held at the course, but almost always on the weekdays.

St. Paul has two 18-hole municipals, neither of which hurt the play at Country View. Pro shop sales are based on balls, gloves, and other miscellaneous items. Mogren has dropped golf equipment all together.

Since 1962, Ben Brubaker has been owner-operator at Hillcrest Golf Center, Washington, Ill. Approximately 10 miles outside Peoria, Hillcrest is an 18-hole executive course with a season stretching from mid-March to mid-November. In 1976, there were nearly 30,000 rounds, a marked increase from '75.

Again, there is no real promotion effort much like many other daily fee operations. Brubaker relies on the yellow pages, general newspaper advertising, and some special events advertising, for example, on Mother's Day and Father's Day. "We also like to attract juniors and work very hard to get these kids out on the course," Brubaker mentioned. Hillcrest has a season ticket plan. Charges are \$70 for a single and \$120 for a couple.

Though he has no formal agronomy experience, Brubaker realizes

having someone around that does is essential. He has hired, over the years, several horticulture graduates from a nearby junior college.

W. G. Stevely, 64, is no stranger to the golf business. He took his farm in Salem, Ore., in 1962 and built his first nine holes. Nine years later, he took a little more of that ground and built nine more, finalizing his Battle Creek Golf Course at its present 18 holes.

With a season falling somewhere between 10 and 11 months, Stevely does his own bookkeeping and over-

sees an operation that includes a regular 44-seat restaurant plus a lounge. These two features produced more than \$125,000 in sales in '76.

With the nearest municipal course 50 miles away in Portland, Battle Creek has no worry here. Stevely is concerned about the skyrocketing taxes in Oregon, even with greenbelt. "If these taxes get any higher, I'll tear the course out and plant spinach," he says. "After 16 years, I enjoy the business. To be honest, though, I wondered why I got into it at first." □

## GOLF BUSINESS PROFILE

# Promotion and perseverance pay off for daily fee owner

by Marino Parascenzo

It's not a big creek, but you can't cross it without a bridge.

You cross the one-lane bridge — about 50 feet of wooden planking set on steel girders anchored to concrete abutments, their bulky shoulders holding everything about 5 feet above the clean water bubbling through an archway of trees — to get to Lindenwood Golf Course, a daily fee course near Canonsburg, in southwestern Pennsylvania. The bridge also, symbolically, carries you to Russ Wylie's way of thinking.

"We had to build that bridge," said Wylie, not in complaint, but in pain, "and we have to pay taxes on it, too."

In that one statement, Wylie wraps up the plight of the daily fee course owner: he's on his own, all the way.

Wylie, an activist among the nation's fee course men, owns Lindenwood, across that little bridge, and Rolling Green, another 18-holer about 6 miles away in the bumpy woodlands south of Pittsburgh. But owner for how long?

Two pressing factors raise that same question for fee course owners all over the nation, Wylie says. Those factors are real estate taxes, a common enemy, and the municipal course, a blood brother so favored by Marino Parascenzo covers golf and other sports for a Pittsburgh daily newspaper.

parent government as to be a downright prodigal son.

"These are not just Pennsylvania problems," Wylie said. "These are national problems." They are, he says, a threat to the very existence of fee courses.

His is not the cry of a solitary wandering soul whose wallet has been injured. At last fall's meeting of the fledgling National Association of Public Golf Courses near Chicago, Steve Alberg of the National Club Association issued a frightening report (GOLF BUSINESS, February 1977) — that 22 percent of the nation's clubs and courses are on the verge of liquidation due to the tax load.

Real estate taxes and municipal courses. At first glance, they may not seem to be related. But as Russ Wylie sees it, each has a hand at the throat of the daily fee course. The taxes squeeze from one direction. The fee operator could loosen that grip by raising his green fees. But the nearby municipal course, with its government-subsidized ability to charge lower fees and its freedom from those same real estate taxes, is squeezing from the other.

Wylie is doing more than wringing his hands. Eight years ago he helped form the Pennsylvania Golf Course Owners, Inc., of which he is a past



Russ Wylie ponders the plight of the daily fee owner-operator. In the background is the clubhouse of his Lindenwood Golf Course.