

Kids come first at course for juniors

by Jerry Claussen

The junior golfer of today is likely to be a regular, full-fare customer of tomorrow. Combine that with the fact that 70 percent of our population lives in and around cities.

The conclusion? **Anyone concerned with building golf's future market should be working on ways and means of enabling youngsters in urban areas to learn golf and have a place to play.**

Unfortunately, most private clubs are reluctant to turn their courses over

to junior members more than one morning a week, if that. Most privately-owned daily fee courses don't want to be bothered. Most municipal courses are already over-crowded.

for juniors. A handful of private clubs have built some extra holes, or a par-3 nine, for their sons and daughters. But there are only two known municipal junior courses, at New Orleans, La., and Lincoln, Neb.

Lincoln's Junior course has been immensely successful, in growth and use. Opened in June 1967, the par-3 nine recorded 9,631 rounds in 20 weeks. By 1970, play was above 20,000 rounds annually. Since 1974, use has averaged more than 28,000 paid rounds per season, plus 3,500 tournament and clinic rounds. That's about 150 per day.

Covering 17 acres, the course lies within a park near the center of the city. It wanders through mature tree groves, crosses a creek, lists holes from 100 to 190 yards, totaling 1,166 yards. The complete course is irrigated. The one-story clubhouse includes golf shop, snack bar, and club room.

Play regulations allow adults during least-busy hours. Juniors 8 through 15 years old always have priority, though. There are no reserved starting times. Adults may play, only with a junior, after 6 p.m. during summer and on holidays and weekends when school is not in session. On school



Facility development consultant for the Rocky Mountain region of the National Golf Foundation from 1965 until July of this year, Jerry Claussen and a former high school golf rival have pooled their resources to buy the Albany Golf Club in Oregon. He will be golf director of the daily fee course.

days, adults may use the course alone until 3 p.m.

Juniors can earn a "preferred golfer" card, and be given a 20 percent discount on green fees, by taking a class in rules and etiquette, then passing a simple test. It takes a score of 80 to pass. About 2,000 juniors have won a "preferred" card since 1971.

Green fees are 75 cents for a regular junior, 15 and under, 60 cents for a "preferred" cardholder, \$1.00 for golfers age 16-17, \$2.00 for adults, and \$1.35 for senior citizens. All fees include sales tax. Adult prices include 20 cents per round for capital improvements. No season tickets are sold.

Group lessons are offered by the city's park and recreation department, under PGA professionals. About 300 juniors are taught annually.

The group clinics consist of four classes, no more than 10 youngsters

per group. Green fees are complimentary to the juniors.

Course managers since 1973 have been Don and Lydia Palmer. Parks and Recreation Director Don Smith gives them credit for the excellent programs. The staff also includes six other seasonal employees for maintenance, starter, and ranger.

The Junior course took in about \$32,000 revenue in 1976. Because of low rates, it is subsidized by profits from the city's three regulation 18-hole courses.

Many city officials and private citizens were involved in starting the facility. The idea was hatched by Joyce Ayers, a Lincoln advertising executive. He visioned a course juniors could call their own because they weren't welcome at the regular clubs, a place to get "educated" in golf.

The idea was next taken to City Hall. The mayor appointed a Junior Golf Committee to study the concept and look into methods of financing. Fortunately, the city already owned an area in Antelope Park that had once been a golf course in the 1930's.

Private enterprise rallied to the cause. About \$70,000 was raised over about 18 months, in 1964 and 1965. Construction was started in 1965. Floyd Farley, Oklahoma City, designed the nine. Harold Glissman, Omaha, was contractor.

The Lincoln Home Builders contributed and built the \$35,000 clubhouse, which was ready in 1966. Weather and a sewer construction project held up the course opening until mid-1967. A dedication and golf clinic marked the occasion.

The Lincoln Elks Lodge No. 80 and city firemen donated time and energy to collect used golf equipment all over the city. These clubs were cut down, regripped, and put into use for clinics and as rentals for youngsters without their own equipment.

Actual cost of the project totaled about \$101,000: \$62,000 for the golf course and \$39,000 to build and equip the clubhouse. Cost to the city: nothing, except use of 28 acres of park.

The late James Ager, who was parks and recreation director until 1970, promoted the idea and helped raise money. When he passed away, the course was renamed as his memorial. □

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per group. Content of the sessions includes:

1) Explanations of the game, course, and equipment; discussion of rules and etiquette with help of the National Golf Foundation's *Illustrated Golf Rules* poster and *Easy Way to Learn Golf Rules* booklets.

2) Learning basics: grip, stance, full swing, chipping, and putting.

3) Practicing basics learned in lesson 2.

4) Review of game, choice of clubs for various shots, and etiquette, aided by NGF film, *Courtesy on the Course*, and rules test.

The course is host to several major tournaments each season. Total entry is about 1,000 players. All use handicaps. The tournaments include a 4-day stroke play and a 2-day Parent-Youth better-ball, sponsored by local firms and the Lincoln Men's Golf Associa-