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GOLF'S 'GREEN BELT': FRESH AIR AND TAXES

Golf is not only big business, the courses are a boon to the environment.

It's more than just the beauty, too. As Maryland forester **A. R. Bond** explains:

"One tree has the cooling effect of five air conditioners. Noise levels are reduced by six to eight decibels by green belts 100 feet wide.

"One acre of growing trees will scrub clean the air polluted by eight automobiles operated for 12 hours. The same acre will absorb the carbon dioxide produced by 50 autos during 12 hours.

"A green belt less than 300 feet wide will produce the same effect on the atmosphere as a one-mile increase in altitude."

Now, one has an idea why things seem so tranquil on a golf course.

In the Chicago area, private and public courses that are privately owned keep 25,000 acres in green ... green like in grass and trees and green like in tax money. Each course will pay from \$50,000 to \$112,000 in real estate taxes, depending on the county.

Even though clubs pay community taxes for services, they provide their own water, garbage disposal, and police and fire protection.

The average club that belongs to the Chicago District Golf Association has an annual cash flow of \$3.25 million. The value of its land and buildings is from \$10 million to \$12 million.

It employs 135 people in the summer and 45 in the winter. It spends about \$200,000 annually in maintenance of the course, tennis courts, swimming pool, and grounds, with \$160,000 going into payrolls and jobs. The average club has a restaurant payroll of about \$175,000 and has a training program for students in all club jobs except the golf shop.

In the Chicago District, there are 113 private clubs employing about 15,000 people and 100 privately owned public courses providing about 9,000 jobs. The total payroll is \$90 million.

In addition, about 20,000 caddies work at these clubs, averaging about \$1,200 if they work most of the summer.

Nationally, there are 12,306 golf courses that keep 1,230,600 acres in green. Other national statistics show the popularity of the game:

- 300 million rounds of golf are played annually.
- 12 million people play 15 or more rounds per year.
- 4 million people play fewer than 15 rounds.
- Private clubs represent 2 million golfers.
- Public courses represent 5.25 million golfers.
- Other courses (municipal, etc.) represent 4.75 million golfers.

The National Golf Foundation estimates that \$4,075,000,000 is invested in land and buildings and \$615 million is spent annually on maintenance.

How big a business is golf? In 1975:

- 18,734,840 golf clubs were sold at an average cost of \$11.11 for sales of \$208,284,377.
- 14,107,022 dozen balls were sold for sales of \$95,676,628.
- 1,821,621 golf bags were sold for \$30,756,000.
- 1,350,126 pairs of golf shoes were sold for \$25,933,583.
- 1,664,396 gloves were sold for \$5,485,425.

Other miscellaneous sales came to \$15,286,384 for total sales in 1975 of \$382,995,288.

In addition, 40,000 new golf cars were purchased in '75 at an average cost of \$1,200 for \$480 million. There are 446,500 cars in use, with electric outnumbering gasoline models 3-1. There were 119,396 pull carts sold in '75 for \$1,171,901.