

Wolf from helps game that has helped him

BY VERN PUTNEY

Born on a golf course in 1934, Clem Wolf from never has left that environment, and now he aims to put something back into the game that has been his lifeblood.

Wolf from, who has been overseeing operations at the Detroit (Mich.) Golf Club since March 1962, has made his mark on Michigan soil — literally.

The Michigan PGA cited him for his leading role in the Michigan Turfgrass Foundation, which was founded by his father, Clarence, and two other men and is run by Michigan State University.

Clem was instrumental in forming the Founders Society, in which 100 persons (almost exclusively course superintendents) gave \$1,000 each over a five-year period for turfgrass research. That program was so

successful that Wolf from and other turf-interested persons have started a new venture. They're signing up 100 private and public course

members in the Michigan area to pledge \$2,000 over five years for a similar project at MSU.

The \$1 million endowment program will spend \$100,000 annually and be used strictly for golf course turf research.

"We're just putting something back into the game which has meant so much to us for so long," Wolf from explains.

"I've had nothing but enjoyment from this profession, always have been employed year-round, and have met many wonderful and friendly people. Golf seems to bring out the best people and the best in people," he said.

Wolf from's roots go deep. His family was living winters in an apartment over the Maple Lane Golf Course clubhouse in Sterling, Mich., when Clem was born. Father Clarence was for 54 years course superintendent at Maple Lane.

His Dad ran a small sod farm to supplement income. Clem and brothers Bruce,



Clem Wolf from at his Detroit Golf Club

Gerald and Wagner were digging weeds when they were 4 and 5 years old, then transferred their talents to the golf course in the company of Clarence. Bruce is course superintendent at Barton Hills Country Club in Ann Arbor, Mich. Gerald became a stockbroker, Wagner an educator.

Before joining Detroit Golf Club, Clem Wolf from was superintendent at Dearborn (Mich.) Country Club for six years. He'd been assistant there for eight months.

Clem still oversees a major earth-moving operation at the North championship course. The 36-hole layout in the heart of Detroit has been closed since August for renovation and won't be re-opened until June.

Vegetation, and bent and fescue grasses have been killed on all fairways and roughs extending 30 feet on each side. Fairways were recontoured, and pennecross bent

grasses were reseeded. Three varieties of rye grasses and fescue were returned to the rough.

This winter, sand in the bunkers was replaced with a sand from Ohio deemed lighter, more consistent, much more expensive and closer to USGA specifications.

Meeting this last standard is important. Detroit GC will host the 1992 Mid-Amateur tournament. Television coverage is probable, and USGA officials like to see sand portrayed properly in quality and color.

Many club members thought the North course was getting a new look strictly as preparation for the Mid-Amateur. Not so, says Wolf from.

Wolf from pinpointed North course decline — from old age — in 1980. The club was founded in 1899. The course was designed in 1914 by noted architect Donald Ross with

10,000-12,000 rounds annually in mind. Greens were small.

Play now exceeds 50,000 rounds yearly. Faster, closer-cut greens are in vogue. The course simply was not built to withstand such stress. Wolf from recommended extensive overhaul to the board of directors and it agreed. So 90 years later, the course is undergoing a rebirth.

Wolf from describes Detroit GC as "an oasis in a swelter of cars and concrete." Basically a membership club, it has prospered because of its green belt location, an oh-so-handy recreational retreat.

Many illustrious pros have served Detroit GC. Horton Smith, the nation's acknowledged premier putter in the 1930s and '40s, was club pro from 1945 to 1964. He died in 1964, and is honored annually with a spring tournament held in conjunction with the Michigan Medal Play event.

Former PGA champion Walter Burkemo, a brilliant match player, succeeded Smith and served 10 years. His assistant was Jimmy Thomson, recognized in the 1930s and '40s as the game's longest hitter. That distinction was passed along in the 1950s to George Bayer, Detroit GC pro from 1974 to 1984. Jim Vaughn has been head pro since 1984.

Wolf from found Thomson particularly fascinating. "I lunched with him almost daily for three years," recalls Wolf from. "He had a fund of stories drawn from vast travel and playing experiences. He was a delightful man."

Reflecting on his lifetime on the links, the 1962 MSU graduate can't think of a thing he'd change. Perhaps years down the road, when retirement looms, Wolf from may realize a long-held ambition — to own a golf course.

As the boss, this might provide more playing opportunity and a chance to sharpen his game, now stuck on a six handicap after swings from three to eight.

Realistically, though, those who know work zealot Wolf from best would bet that his responsibility for the course would end up overriding his desire to play. It runs in the family.

SUPER FOCUS

Insurance plan reaches Mississippi

Golf associations sign on as co-sponsors of cost-saving program

The Country Club Insurance Program that is endorsed by the National Golf Foundation is now available in 15 states from the Atlantic coast to the Mississippi River, according to the NGF.

Four golf associations are co-endorsing the program with the NGF so far and are providing the program as a benefit to their member clubs. They are the Georgia State, Northern Ohio, Chicago District and Carolinas golf associations.

The Country Club Insurance Program is part of a package of plans that reportedly can save qualifying golf facilities and associations 20-40 percent on their annual premiums. It was first offered in North and South Carolina, Illinois and Ohio late last year.

Most recently, it was introduced in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, Tennessee, Virginia and Wisconsin.

It will continue to be introduced on a state-by-state basis throughout 1989.

The NGF said the program's two key elements are:

- Risk management standards that enable participating clubs to improve safety

conditions.

- Insurance products that have been custom-designed to cover all of the liability exposures at a golf club, including pesticide and herbicide coverage, liquor liability, directors' and officers' liability, business auto, inland marine, and crime and umbrella liability coverage.

In addition to this program, the NGF is endorsing the Executive Risk Plan for private golf clubs and the Association Insurance Program, a comprehensive plan for nonprofit local, state and regional golf associations and PGA Sections.

Associations participating in the Association Insurance Program include the Carolinas, Chicago District, Connecticut State, Georgia State, Massachusetts, Metropolitan, Nassau Women's, Northern Ohio, San Diego Women's, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Women's Southern California golf associations

Also, the Golf Association of Philadelphia; New Jersey Section PGA; San Diego County Junior Golf Association; and Women's Golf Association of Philadelphia.

FAI Insurance Counseling, Inc. is the administrator of the insurance programs,

while Crum & Forster and Chubb Group of Insurance Companies are the underwriters.

For more information people may contact Tom Marks, FAI, Golf Course Insurance Programs, 10 Waterview Blvd., Parsippany, N.J. 07054 (1-800-446-5311) or Christine Bell, Crum & Forster, 3414 North Duke St., Durham, N.C. 27704 (1-800-367-8744).

Foremost reports Meadowood GC sale pending

Foremost Corp. of America said it signed a definitive agreement for the sale of the Grand Rapids (Mich.) Marriott Inn, and the Meadowood Golf Course located in Centennial Park to Holly's Inc., a Grand Rapids-based hotel and restaurant corporation.

The sale, announced in mid-February, is subject to certain conditions, including obtaining all approvals and authorizations, Foremost said.

Azar's Inc., the manager of the hotel since it was opened in 1980, will continue to operate the hotel.

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