

Course for handicapped takes shape

Many companies offering services

BY MARK LESLIE

Inspired by an "excellent idea" with "worthwhile" goals, companies of all sorts are offering to help build the country's first golf course for the physically handicapped.

Edwin Shaw Hospital in Akron, Ohio, hopes to have its three-hole course, driving range and practice area seeded by this fall, when it will make a pitch for renewed funding from the NEC World Series of Golf.

"People have given a lot," said Linda Cinson, vice president of marketing and development at the rehabilitation hospital. "The project seems to have a lucky star over it, it is so charmed."

Among the free offers:

- Lesco Inc. of Rocky River, Ohio, will donate all grass seed and fertilizer.
 - Wadsworth Construction Co. in Plainfield, Ohio, has committed to build and shape the course.
 - Hurdzan Design Group of Columbus, Ohio, will design the facility.
 - Pro Path Inc. of Englewood, Fla., will install all golf cart paths.
 - Commercial Pump Service of Swanton, Ohio, is donating a pumping station.
 - Kurtz Bros. of Cuyahoga Heights, Ohio, will mix the sand.
 - Local tree companies will clear the site.
 - A firm is considering building a prototype golf car wheelchair.
- "A lot of people want to and will be involved," said Paul Eldredge of Wadsworth Construction, who is coordinating construction. "It's a



PGA Pro Tom McKinney helps John Willims improve his swing at Edwin Shaw Hospital.

good project. It's an excellent idea. I think it's very worthwhile.

"There's enough property there to do what they want to do, and it won't cost a lot. But it will take a little time and effort to get it all coordinated."

The timetable has been slowed by the discovery that the wetlands on the site are larger than originally thought. Architect Barry Serafin said surveyors checked the land in July to delineate wetlands.

The wetlands required adjustments to his

original routing plan, Serafin said.

Saying planners still hope to have "something done to show the project is off the ground" in time for the World Series of Golf, Aug. 24-27 at Firestone Country Club in Akron, Eldredge said: "It's going to be hard to get it done this year. If it could get seeded this year it will be a blessing."

The number of parties involved will slow the project, Eldredge said. "Everybody wants to do good, but when it comes the day to get their equipment, or whatever, down there, they may have to work it into their schedule. That makes it harder to coordinate."

Meanwhile, handicapped golfers are being trained by the dozens at Edwin Shaw Hospital and are awaiting their chance to play on a real course.

Coordinated by PGA Pro Tom McKinney of Fox Den Golf Course in Stowe, Ohio, four area professionals have donated their time teaching 14-person classes at the hospital.

Edwin Shaw conducted three series of classes in 1989 and has had three already this year, with more scheduled.

Cinson said the hospital had envisioned a nine-hole course but opted to begin with three holes and the practice facilities to make it a learning center "with the hope of expanding later."

"We want a clubhouse with a facility to adapt equipment for the handicapped," she said.

Cinson tempered any optimism, saying, "People have given a lot, but we still need more."

She said \$20,000 of the \$60,000 received from the World Series of Golf has been spent on artificial Mod Sod and grass practice

Course designed for all to play

Paul Eldredge of Wadsworth Construction Co. said the new course for the handicapped will have to appeal to everyone, "because there are not enough handicapped golfers to pay for upkeep."

Architect Barry Serafin of Hurdzan Design Group said the course is not designed for the handicapped, meaning handicapped players don't want to feel their disability was catered to in terms of difficulty.

But the design will address special problems facing the handicapped. For instance:

- Cart paths from tee to green.
- Specially designed wheelchairs with wider tires that reduce compaction on the greens.
- Access areas, like ramps, onto greens and tees.
- Flat sand traps.

"We want to make it as natural as possible," Serafin said. "Slopes won't be as severe but it will be a challenge for everybody."

Planners have considered Mod Sod, artificial grass and real grass for the greens on the course. They are leaning toward bentgrass.

greens, a driving range, equipment for classes, a video and book library, and brochures.

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