

Minnesotans must find alternatives

Soldiers Field down for 2 years

BY PETER BLAIS

Rochester is gearing up for a shortage of municipal golf holes with the scheduled closing of the southeastern Minnesota city's most popular course for the 1992-93 seasons.

The two-year closing of Soldiers Field Golf Course, while flood-control work is done along four holes that cross the Cumbro River, will remove 50,000 rounds a year from the city's golfing capacity.

That will put an additional burden on Rochester's other two

municipal courses — Eastwood and Northern Hills — and other facilities in surrounding townships.

In the short run, golf-rabid Rochesterites — 15.3 percent of the city's population, almost 50 percent above the national average, play the game — will have to look for alternatives. And they are relatively plentiful since the metropolitan area's 99 public golf holes rank it 58th out of the 350 cities the National Golf Foundation surveys.

"With the growing popularity of golf, it's going to create some difficulties," said city golf director Bumper Westrum. "People are going to have to drive farther or

play at different times. We find that 80 percent of the play is done during 20 percent of our open time."

To alleviate the shortage over the long run, the city plans to build a new 18-hole facility, partly financed by this year's 28-percent increase (from \$220 to \$285 for a single membership) in season passes. Westrum said he expected more flak than he's received ("Just one phone call so far") over the hike.

"It's the biggest increase in my 24 years. We've been talking about it for so long, I guess people just knew it was coming," said the city golf director.

Four possible sites for the new course are under consideration. The front-runner is located northeast of the city along Route 63, according to Westrum.

But the new facility isn't expected to be ready for play until the late 1990s. The current priority is completing work on Soldiers Field to protect it from a flood similar to the one in 1978 that killed four people and left 30 percent of the city underwater.

"We're planning to do some other renovations and build a new clubhouse (the existing one was built in 1936) while the course is closed," said Westrum.

NEWS

American Golf buys Riverside

American Golf Corp. has bought Riverside Golf Club outside Dallas Texas.

The par 72, 18-hole course, designed by Roger B. Packard, will be open to the public.

Its facilities include a clubhouse, golf shop, food and beverage facilities and driving range.

Aaron joins Davis firm

Golfer Tommy Aaron's "experience and knowledge of the game" is a valuable asset to offer clients, said Arthur L. Davis in announcing that the longtime professional has joined Davis' golf course design firm as a PGA tour consultant.

"Tommy will be an active participant in sales and promotion of our golf course projects and co-designer of all Arthur Davis/Tommy Aaron Signature Courses," said Davis from his Gainesville, Ga., headquarters.

Aaron played the PGA Tour from 1961 through 1978, finishing in the top 60 money winners from 1963 to 1973.

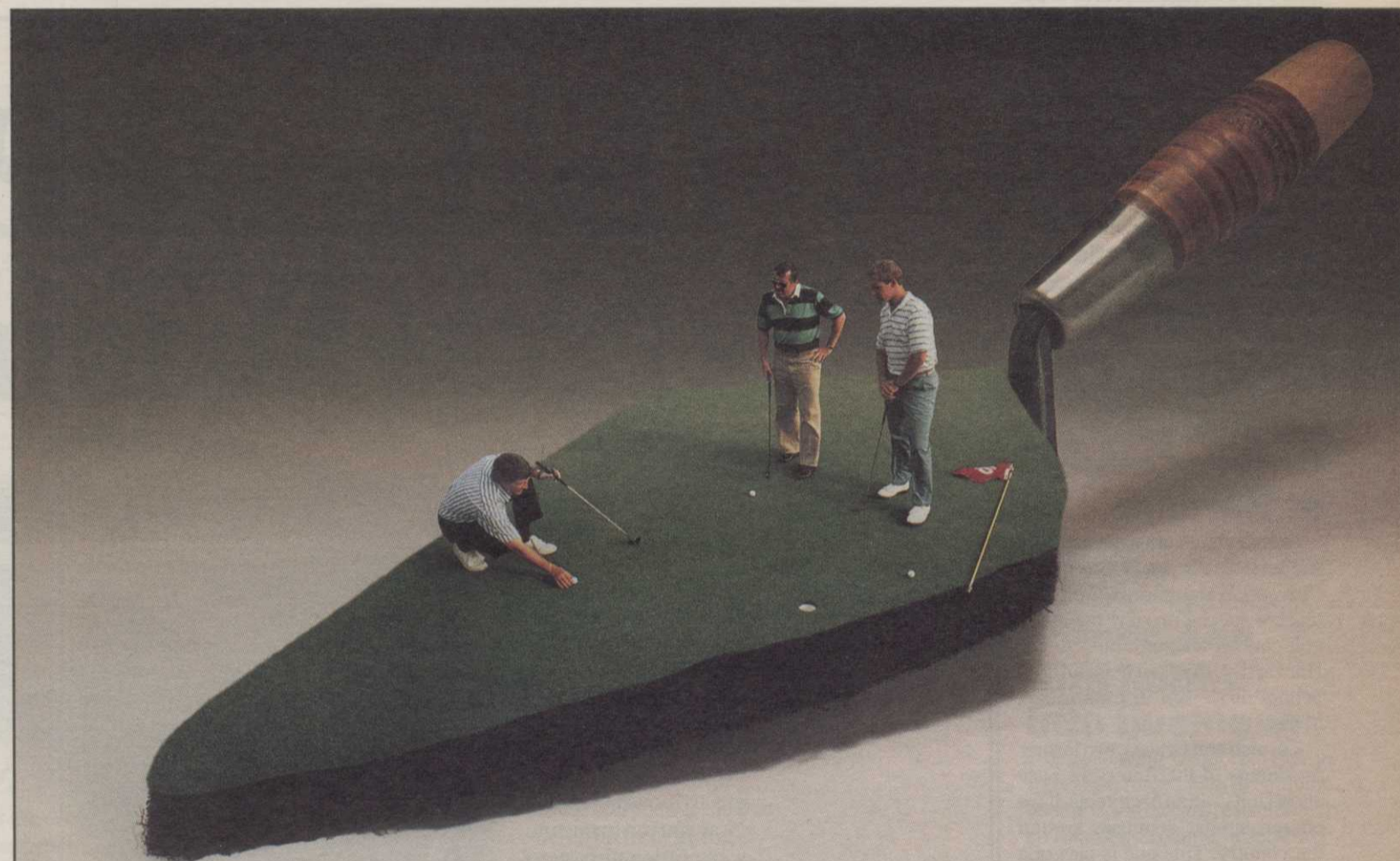
Selected to the Georgia Golf Hall of Fame last year, he won the 1973 Masters tournament and played on Walker Cup and Ryder Cup teams.

Bond approved to finance city course

The Carbondale (Ill.) Park District has approved floating a general obligation bond to finance a proposed golf course, in a move it feels will save as much as \$300,000 in interest.

District officials said the bond could take half a percentage point off the rate from the original financing, which was to be an installment purchase contract.

The district was trying to narrow the \$329,000 gap between anticipated costs and the bids from contractors. The course is expected to cost \$2.5 million.



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