

Public School Golf Boon to Pros

By FRANK LEWIS

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GOLF in the public schools was started in Fort Smith, Arkansas, by Earl U. Hardin three years ago. When I first heard of it I could not conceive of it being possible to make golf a requirement in public schools. Yet, after getting into it, I found that it is the most practical thing ever started in the schools from a sport and athletic standpoint. There are many cardinal principles which go toward putting this over. First, the position that the school authorities take is that they are attempting to instruct the children in everything that will be useful in after life, and the local school authorities claim that they have been accomplishing this in everything except sport. Second, golf is the only known game that can be played from the cradle to the grave, and played by boys and girls, weak and strong. This is demonstrated by one school girl here, only thirteen years old, who has been able in tournament play to shoot consistently under a hundred, and I claim that this is not bad golf for a thirteen-year-old girl who has only played a short time, and I might add, spends very little time in lessons or practice.

The local schools have put canvas sheets in the back of the gymnasium, and suspended them on wires so that they can be drawn together or pushed back to clear the gymnasium. Under these arrangements, five or six can be hitting the balls at the same time. It has been found advisable to use at the beginning soft rubber balls and enamel them. This prevents the possibility of an accident at the start, as children are inclined to be reckless about hitting balls when they first start, as well as wild, and they do not seem to realize that a golf ball will hurt.

On Thursday, November 15th, the high school golf team, consisting of boys and girls, started on a five days' tour, making the principal cities in Arkansas. Among other places that they were to play were Hot Springs and Little Rock, Arkansas. They were not able to meet high school teams in match play in all these places, but

where they can not meet a team of high school boys and girls they will play local club members, and it is expected in another year all the towns visited this year will have school golf teams.

Plan Trip for Students

Fort Smith citizens are now planning for an extensive trip through the United States next spring when school is out and judging from the invitations they are getting, this trip should last over a period of two months. The ambition of parties making this move is to cover portions of Canada, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Ohio, Indiana, New York and Pennsylvania. They will visit in such towns as extend invitations. I would suggest to pros that they talk to their club members and arrange to have this team visit their club, as it will do more to stimulate the game and help the club than anything I know of.

The one thing the pro wants to know is, what benefit will come to them as a result of golf in schools, and what will they have to do to put it over? I can best illustrate that by telling you what I have done here. I volunteered my services to give lessons to the school children in group formation three mornings a week for half an hour, which does not interfere with club duties.

The fact that children picked up the game so rapidly was noticeable to club members and people generally about the town, and the result is that I am swamped with lessons, and as these trips are being planned for the children, parents are all wanting their children on the team and, of course, the members of a team will be worked out on an elimination process and they are all going to be the best customers for the pros. I should say unquestionably that this is the greatest thing that has happened in the golfing world for many days for the benefit of the pros and the general advancement of the game.

I will gladly answer in GOLFDOM any letters and questions relative to our experience.