

Iron Club Practice Courses Look Hopefully at 1932

By CARL HORN

POSTHUMOUS PROGENY of the Tom Thumb craze again seem to be due for play during 1932. The vest pocket putting courses now are only vague memories to the early settlers but the ambitious pitch-and-putt courses, introduced the middle of 1931, apparently got through the year in shape that sets them for 1932 money-making.

Most expensive of these layouts is the West Wilmette (Ill.) established with its full sized greens for shots up to 165 yards and its special lighting equipment. Despite a late start the job showed sound probabilities of profit that 1932 should develop.

At Columbus, O., the Elmcrest golf course which opened last July 5 as an 18-hole layout with holes ranging from 58 to 120 yards and stock night-lighting equipment, had a satisfactory first year, although it did not play any sensational symphonies on the cash register.

The layout covers about 20 acres and has a covered double-decked practice-driving tee arrangement in connection. There are 6 practice tees on both levels. The American Aggregates Co. owns this course, which is on property adjoining one of its plants. Because the Aggregate plant's big current requirements earn a low rate, the cost of night lighting the course is low. This company also owns the Dublin Road full size 18-hole daily-fee course in Columbus. Herb Vance is manager of both golf plants and had as his assistant at the lighted course a live youngster named Geo. Smith, who was active in getting business and conducting tournaments.

About \$40,000 was spent in installing the Elmcrest establishment. This included clearing, course construction and lighting. Greens were sodded with creeping bent and shortly after their installation the sod webworm did one of its devastating 1931 jobs of playing hell. As a matter of fact both the West Wilmette and Elmcrest course business probably suffered on account of the establishments being opened before the greens were in the condition

they eventually attained. Players get the initial idea that the greens are bad and shy away from ballyhooing the place or from return visits.

At Elmcrest, 100 standards 30 to 40 ft. high carry the floodlighting units. Around \$7,000 was spent for the floodlighting equipment. No one make of unit is standardized. Giant, General Electric, Benjamin and Ivanhoe equipment is used. The pipe standards are set in concrete. Lighting bill runs around \$12 a night. The topography at Elmcrest is rugged for so small a course and some of the holes are in a valley from which playing egress is made by a blind shot to a green. There are several wooded spots on the course, although by no means as heavily wooded as is much of the West Wilmette plant. Woods in these layouts mean substantially increased costs of lighting installation and current.

Lights and Scenery Ads

There are 5 water hazards in the layout. These are artificial and are supplied from an illuminated cascade that faces High road, one of the main highways in the Columbus sector. It makes attractive advertising.

The lighting units have electrical devices for killing bugs and although this equipment is not used throughout the course it is kept busy.

All holes on the course are par 3, with a 689 yardage out and 729 yards in. The Hole yardage runs: 83-65-74-79-85-68-107-36-92, out; and, 58-70-64-120-66-100-105-62-84, in.

Rates for play are 50c in daytime and 75c at night, with 25c for each additional round. The average time for playing a round is from 1¼ to 1½ hours. There are no charges for club rentals but 50 per cent of the players bring their own clubs. Very few cases of club loss have been experienced.

The course is not located in the part of town where most of the golfers live but part of this disadvantage is overcome by a strong play for hotel business. The course opened with newspaper ads and an exhibi-

tion, tied up with a local stage show. Blind bogey tournaments and exhibitions have been the main features of promotion. Play is divided about 70 per cent men and 30 per cent women, with the youngsters constituting a fair part of the trade. It is expected that the 1932 play will show a larger percentage of women as many women followed the men players during the first season.

The course does not offer the variety of shots that West Wilmette provides and its 40 traps not as deep as those as West Wilmette where championship-size course conditions are approximated.

One interesting operating detail has to do with out-of-bounds balls on the south side of the course. This forbidden territory is used by a florist who usually has about \$2,000 worth of flowers growing. So much damage was done to these flowers during the early weeks of course operation that a boy is sent among the flowers at intervals to pick up the balls. Players are prohibited from going after the balls.

PRO HAS CLUB PAPER

Jack Martin Boosts Sales and Club with Fircrest

INTENSIVE cultivation of the pro's sharply confined market is responsible for many pros doing some good advertising. Probably 1932 will see a lot more of this sort of work as the smart boys are planning to make the most of their chances for business.

In several instances pros have used house organs of their own for effective advertising to their members. The little publications are sent to the members and have great good-will value as well as direct sales effect because the pros do considerable boosting for their clubs in this publicity.

One of the most recent of the house-organs is that put out by Jack J. Martin, pro at the Fircrest G. C., Tacoma, Wash. Jack calls this four-page 4½ in. by 7 in. publication the *Fircrest*. The material is sent out as a folder with the member's address and an attractive illustration of a Fircrest green with Mount Tacoma in the background, on the front cover.

The middle two pages of the *Fircrest* are devoted to boosting the club. There is a story "Fircrest members pay less" on page 2 in which the costs of playing at

other clubs in the vicinity are compared with the expenses of membership at Jack's home spot. Fircrest has quite a story to tell in this respect as the dues are only \$6.67 a month.

On the third page is "The President's Monthly Message." President R. C. Barlow devotes the first part of his page to telling how Fircrest stacks up with some of the leading, expensive courses in California which he recently visited. The concluding paragraph of his message he uses for telling about Jack Martin's collection difficulties and urging the members to pay their pro accounts promptly.

Jack uses the last page for an ad on golf bags, clubs, balls and apparel. He features the line "Buy From Your Pro at Lower Prices." He also pushes a good little story on getting clubs ready for the spring campaign and invites the members to come in and visit by the pro shop fire-side.

Pro Is Pleased

The Fircrest club has 300 members. It costs Jack \$25 a month to get out the *Fircrest*. Martin's comment on the publication, tips off the other fellows to a stunt that they might try to beat up some business during 1932. Martin says:

"For some time I have had the idea that a pro could advertise at a profit as well as any other business. The ordinary sales letter never has had the desired effect with me, so it occurred to me that if I could get something out that would carry news that would interest the members, I could at the same time advertise my wares. Hence the *Fircrest*. It is my opinion that if the members of my club know that I am interested in their problems and welfare they will be interested in me and my shop.

"The *Fircrest* is published monthly and is sent to every member in the club. Our President, Mr. R. C. Barlow, writes his little say every month. I might add he is very clever and has a large following in the club, so the stuff he writes is read.

"I have only brought out 3 issues to date and have more than been repaid for my efforts. My club cleaning list is larger today than it was last summer. I have always heretofore dropped down at least one-third. It is difficult to trace any sale back to a thing of this kind, but I will say that I have no kick on the amount of business that I have done this winter."