



How the 7th and 8th fairways at Eastwood Hills looked at night during the \$9,000 experiment.

Smiles Thru Tears at \$9,000 Blow In Night Golf Trial

By "CAP" TURNER

NINE THOUSAND DOLLARS worth of experience in these days of high priced dollars looks like a lot of experience. Laid end to end it looks as if it ought to reach clear around the golf world and have a little left over for shinney, ice hockey and other sports. However, here is \$9,000 worth of experience with night golf for you, at the same price Herb Graf-fis charges you for this snappy little magazine.

About three years ago night baseball was beginning to see the light and the three owners of the Eastwood Hills C. C. (Kansas City, Mo.) of whom I happen to be one, got the urge to be the first in the world to take a fling at night play on a full-length golf course. Our course was hilly, of average length, with a heavy fringe of timber and a considerable sprinkling of mature trees on the course itself. It offered about as severe a test for lighting as could be im-

aged, but after careful tests and a lot of experimenting with foot candle power or candle horse power or some other technical unit of measure the engineers announced, that it could be done.

A Circus Opening.

We spent a lot of sleepless nights and worrisome days wondering whether after all it would be light enough for practical play, or whether you could really see a golf ball after you hit it, or whether you could find it after it lit, and even whether the conditions at night would allow the players to play with sufficient confidence to make the game a success. Those look like the logical things to worry about, now don't they? But we were all wrong. We worried about the wrong things entirely. I will tell you about that a little later.

We took the plunge, bought \$9,000 worth of experience and announced to the world

the first "Midnight Open." The opening night was fair and fine and the first shot off of the tee was the second shot that was heard around the world. Newspapers all over the world carried the news that golf at night was now a reality, an accomplished fact.

The flight of the balls was easy to follow, it was almost impossible to lose a ball, and after two or three shots the players were hitting the ball with all of the confidence in the world. Good players scores ran about like they would in the daytime and the average player scored a little better; in my own case about two to three strokes better on each nine. There was not quite the urge to hit it out of the lot that there was in the day time and the brightly lighted greens made wonderful targets to shoot at. And putting, boys, you never saw anything like it! The putts just naturally dropped.

The grand opening was a success. The players complimented the course and one prominent sports writer announced that the way to wealth was now open to all public-fee golf course owners. Just light the course for night play and let the shekels roll in night and day. Just hire a cashier to take the money and the owners could spend the winters in California or Florida, the summers up North and could make an occasional trip to Europe between times. We heaved a sigh of relief. All of our worries were over and we engaged passage on the Leviathan.

And then, just as we were ready to live happily ever after, the honeymoon blew up right in our face. We had worried about the wrong things and it was the little things that we forgot that bit us in the end. To begin with we looked for good play on Saturday and Sunday nights, but we were wrong. The boys played in the day time on those days and did not care for the night work. Then play is always light on Monday as the boys get all they want on Sunday. That eliminated three nights right off the reel. There was nearly half the week gone before we had started.

Players Were "All Wet."

In addition we had overlooked some other little features. Among these is the "gentle dew from heaven." We found that golfers do not mind wet feet when they start out in the morning as by the time they get in about noon the sun has dried them up in good shape, but at night the

farther they went the wetter they got. The experience of coming in with shoes, socks and feet wet, killed off some of the more tender customers and we lost them. Then there was another little feature that we overlooked. The players generally finished around about 11 to 11:30 p. m. After a round of golf it seems impossible to relax and sleep immediately. The result was that when the old alarm clock went off about 6 or 7 a. m. the guy that had played the night before felt like he hadn't been to sleep yet. He dragged himself out of bed, kicked the cat out of the room and told his wife that she was slipping and that her coffee did not have the kick of that which mother used to make. The wife usually retaliated by telling him to choose between her and this crazy night golf. He could pack his things and move out to the golf course and she would go home to mother. Believe it or not some of them decided to give up the golf and we lost some more customers.

To make matters worse, every now and then it rained. You can play golf comfortably in the day time shortly after a rain, but it seems to take two or three days of dry weather after a rain to make night golf enjoyable. To top it all off there was one little detail that we had not considered. All of the players wanted to start just at dark. If you have ever run a golf course you realize of course that you can start only about one foursome every five minutes under favorable conditions. At night it is even a trifle slower.

If you ever graduated from one of the high-powered business schools you know of course that they teach this as a fundamental principle: If you take in \$18 every night and spend or pay out only \$16 you can continue in business forever and can pay dividends on your investment and now and then borrow money at your bank. Or at least you could in the good old days. If you reverse the figures however and take in \$16 and pay out \$18 it is only a question of time until the sheriff will tack a little piece of paper on your front door and your creditors will not send flowers. We made every legitimate effort to boost the game, to ballyhoo it, and to keep it going, but at last decided to beat the sheriff to it, which we did by an eyelash. With keen reluctance we pulled the switch and shut off the lights for the last time.

Now the proud lights which looked down on the first and only "Midnight Open" are scattered to the four winds listening to

the raucous cheers of the spectators at this new game of Kittenball or Diamondball or whatever name you want to apply to this imitation baseball that us older fellows have sunk to, or they are shining down on some college football field, or even calmly lighting the yard of some service station where the most exciting thing they do is grease your car.

Now for the second guess or the hypothetical question which comes to us every little while. "If you had \$9,000 would you invest it in a night lighting plant, if you had a golf course"?

My answer is this: If I ever had \$9,000 again (Will this depression never lift) I might invest it in a night golf plant, but only under these conditions: The course would have to be in some magical South Sea Island, or some mythical Florida paradise or in some imaginary California Utopia where the nights are always soft and fair, where there is no dew from Heaven or Hell or wherever it comes from, where the women have dispositions of angels and urge the boys to go out and have a little fun while the night is still young, and where the boys do not have to work for a living so they can sleep as late as they like in the morning. Under those conditions, even considering the number of barrels of 3.2 beer \$9,000 will buy, I might take another flyer.

Come to think of it though, I do not believe I would. I believe I would let some one else do it and I would spend a part of the money with him. Every little while there comes a night when the air is soft and still and I get the urge to smack one on the nose and see it flaming through the night sky like a shooting star. And still oftener on Sunday morning when the putts are going haywire and will not get near the cup I long for those night lighted greens where the ball ran up like it was on wheels and dropped in the cup just as if it had the eyes of an owl. Yes sir, if some one will just light up that course in that enchanted spot I spoke of, if I ever get the money and if my wife will let me, I will spend a share of it with him.

Night golf is practical; the mechanics of it do not bother at all; the things you would naturally worry about are phantoms that do not exist. But north of the Mason and Dixon line, I fear it will not pay dividends. That is the second guess. And while the boys down at Washington are trying to find out ways and means to get rich for all of us I suggest that they just

pass a law giving us two guesses in business and I will promise not to ask for anything else.

That's the sad story mates, \$9,000 worth of it, and all of the details of how the criminal was detected and the heroine was saved will be furnished on receipt of your inquiry, but remember, return postage must be paid. Experience is a valuable teacher.

PUBLIC HOWLS

Chicago Public Park Golf Lease Stirs Protest Rally

AS FORECAST in a comment in *May GOLFDOM*, plenty of embarrassment was caused to West Park (Chicago) officials who had the brazen impudence to present an expense account to the public, of \$35,000 for the annual maintenance of the nine-hole public golf courses at Garfield and Columbus parks.

The deal was raw enough under the previous administration, as both courses could have been kept in better condition than they were for around \$5,000. This figure of \$5,000 may seem low, but you ought to see the courses. They are short, pool table affairs. Income of both courses was \$18,000 in 1932. The deficit could be accounted for quite accurately as the graft that burdens park course operation too frequently until some newspaper learns the popularity of an expose of the free-handed thievery that goes on at a public course.

In Chicago the *Evening American*, a Hearst paper, picked up this hot cause and banged it around with bold face type, printing the simple facts until 8,000 people turned out at a mass meeting to protest against the award of the golf concessions for \$5,000 to private operators by the present board. The boys who made the \$5,000 successful bid, which a statement at the mass meeting pronounced an inside deal and not the result of public bidding, can not be blamed. With an \$18,000 income coming in where the public was pushed around and petty larceny was practiced in allotting starting times, private operators certainly could develop enough more business to make a handsome profit, even with the kick-back that some people, who have a sort of a sacrilegious attitude toward Chi-