



Everett Leonard teaches high school girl golf classes as part of their physical training study.

Winter Group Classes Make Fond du Lac Golf-Minded

By DON W. HOOD

BRIEFLY, THIS IS the story of a golf pro who didn't go south for the winter and a club which quadrupled its membership before the snow was off the ground.

The city of Fond du Lac has two courses. The Town and Country club owns and operates an attractive nine-hole course for its members while the rest of the city's golfers play on the Takodah Springs 18-hole course.

For a city of 26,000 population, Fond du Lac has been below par in the number of regular golfers. The reason for this low figure is hardly explainable but it cannot be denied that efforts have been made to stimulate an interest in the sport of chasing the little white pellet.

Things looked dark last fall when golf clubs were hung away for the winter. Even Everett Leonard, jovial Takodah Springs pro, was a little depressed when the days grew shorter and leaves blanketed the course. It was the beginning of fall and after fall comes plenty of winter in Wisconsin.

Phil Greenwald, Town and Country club pro, packed his belongings, bid good bye to

another of Wisconsin's winters and started for the balmy south. Leonard, stayed on, intending to erect an indoor driving net. Leonard's idea, however, was received with lukewarm enthusiasm and he forgot about it.

However, something did happen, unexpectedly, of course, which tended to cause a complete change in the attitude of non-golfers and occasional golfers in the city. The remarkable thing of it all is the fact that sporting goods dealers and course operators were quite unaware of the novel stunt which was to be undertaken and the benefit they were to receive as a result.

Teaching to 1,200 Kids.

It's what would have been called a locker-room conference during the season, the suggestion was made, "why not teach golf in the high school?" The idea took at once and school officials were interviewed. The result was on a cold Monday morning, Leonard showed up at the Senior high school, loaded down with clubs and equipment, ready to start the task of teaching 1,200 boys and girls the elemental principles of golf.

Leonard worked in cooperation with the

members of the physical education staff and arranged his schedule so that each student received a lesson a week. He confined his teaching at first to proper grip and stance. Then the students were taught how to swing. Rhythm was the keynote of the swinging lectures. Woods and irons were used during the course.

At the conclusion of the course, a check was made on the attitude of the students toward golf. Out of the nearly 1,200 who completed the work, 116 indicated that they did not care to continue. An examination of this dissenting group revealed that fifty-odd had already played golf and didn't care to practice during the winter.

Incidentally one member of the group was the winner of the C flight in the county tournament. The remaining boys and girls expressed themselves in a few words that they did not care for the game. It was conservatively estimated by the principal of the high school that 1,000 students enjoyed the lessons and were now or would be later on, potential golf customers.

The second "break" came around the first of the year when it was decided to include golf in the WERA projects which were being started at that time. Announcement was made in the paper that registrations for the class would take place at a certain hour. The enrollment was limited to adults, whether they had played golf or not. Long before the time for registration arrived, the classes were filled and a waiting list of more than 50 golfers stood ready to step into vacancies as they occurred.

250 Adults Begin.

Leonard was selected for the job and conducted classes for 250 golfers each week. Because of the popularity of the course, a rule was instituted and enforced that any member missing two "recitations" was to be dropped.

The class headquarters were established in the spacious basement of an investment company. Classes were divided into groups of 10 and were held mornings, afternoons and evenings.

As for instruction, Leonard took five at a time, gave lessons in swinging and then had each member hit four balls into the driving net. Easy contests were arranged to stimulate interest, such as giving prizes for the person who was able to ring a bell the most times. The bell was suspended over a "bull's eye" at the end of the net.

The number of non-golfers who enrolled

in the WERA classes was surprising. Of course there were the regulars who joined to keep in trim but the bulk of the enrollments consisted of persons who had played probably three or four games.

While the best authorities around Fond du Lac are hesitant to estimate how many of the high school students will take up golf this season, it can be safely said that at least 100 were regular customers on the courses. Sporting goods dealers give support to this statement on the number of sales of clubs and inquiries about golfing equipment.

The WERA classes, however, will prove the most profitable. Last year, the Takodah Springs course had a little over a score of season memberships. Thus far, 80 have signified an intention to take out a season membership or have paid the membership and the season is still a long way off.

The small number of memberships is not a fault of the course or the management of Takodah. Various stunts were tried, at considerable expense, to interest golfers in the Takodah course. Some benefits were noted but the response to these efforts was far from satisfactory.

The city, it seems, with the advantages of two excellent courses, has never been golf-minded. Other cities with even smaller populations, boast around a thousand and even more regular golfers while Fond du Lac could muster around only 400.

This year, however, it will be different. As a final climax to the "winter golf" program, sporting goods dealers are going to hold a sale of golf equipment, at moderate prices, to enable the newcomers to the sport to start out right.

The adult class idea is so firmly fixed in the minds of golfers that plans have been started to conduct similar classes at the vocational school next winter. The classes in the high school will also probably be resumed.

IS YOUR course one of the last to open in the spring? Do your fairways remain water-logged for a week or so after some nearby course has opened for the season? Perhaps the key to an earlier opening for you is to install drain pipe in the most water-logged spots. Within a season or two, increased patronage due to earlier opening in the spring will more than repay the cost of installing these lines.