

HE OPERATES NINE FEE COURSES

By WALTER McCALLUM



S. G. Leoffler, Jr.

IN WASHINGTON fifteen years ago the fellow was peddling lunch boxes around the Veteran's Bureau and other Government departments where the pretty little stenogs tripped out for a snack at noontime. Today he is the biggest operator of public and semi-public golf courses in the entire Middle Atlantic sector, operating 99 holes of golf stretching from within a mile or so of the mammoth Bureau of Printing and Engraving, where those elusive dollars come from; through Annapolis and down to Richmond.

Severine G. Leoffler, Jr. is known around the National Capital as the grandpappy of public links golf. Sports writers in Washington call him Santa Claus because each year when the time rolls around for the national Public Links championship he digs down in his capacious jeans and comes up with the dough to send four local lads to National, whether it be played in Seattle or on Long Island. Incidentally, he hopes he won't have to put out so much coin next year. He is angling for the 1937 National Public Links championship for his East Potomac Park course, where the tourney was held in 1923.

Strictly a business man, Leoffler got in on the ground floor of public links golf in the Mid-Atlantic sector, back in the days when the then Col. W. W. Harts and Walter J. Travis had laid out an experimental nine-hole course on a reclaimed marsh built out into the Potomac River. Before that time the only public layout in Washington was a dinky little 9-hole course of around 1,800 yards, all drive and putt holes. Today the guy operates a flock of first class golf courses with just about the cheapest rates you could find in many a trip around this bunkered land. He has under his thumb four 9-hole courses in East Potomac Park, the original 9-hole

layout in West Potomac Park; an 18-hole course in wooded and hilly Rock Creek Park, where Teddy Roosevelt used to do his horse-back riding, and one day had an idea the entire area should be set aside for a public park; 9-holes of semi-public golf at the Annapolis Roads Club, which he took over two years ago from a bankrupt organization; 9-holes at Seven Pines, near Richmond, and a modern 18-hole layout at Westwood, also in the Virginia state Capital.

**Drives A Dime
Past the \$75,000 Mark**

Leoffler literally went into the golf operating business with a prayer and a dime. Today he owns more than \$50,000 worth of course equipment in Washington and probably half that much at Richmond and Annapolis. The situation in Washington is unusual in public links operation, for the United States owns the land and the courses which Leoffler operates, probably the only place in the east so operated. He leases the courses from the National Park Service, and so well has he done his job that in 15 years of recurrent assignment of the three-year contracts he never has had a serious bidding competitor. Several years ago I asked Lieut. Col. U. S. Grant, 3rd, then in charge of the public parks in Washington, why the continued assignment of the golf contract to Leoffler, as each three-year term ended. "He was the only original bidder who turned in a business-like bid accompanied by check," Grant said. "And he has continued to be the most business-like bidder of them all. He has done a good job and a satisfactory

Does Your Club Issue a Monthly Bulletin?

From the many country club magazines and bulletins GOLFDOM receives we get a great, inside, accurate picture of activities and scores of good ideas that tip us off to stories of methods clubs can employ to advantage.

It seems to us that much good would be done the golf field if a list of such club publications were compiled and printed in GOLFDOM. Then, if the editors of these publications so desired, they could exchange issues, so that the hundreds of helpful ideas to be found in these bulletins might aid officials of other clubs to profitable and pleasant club operation.

Please see that GOLFDOM is put on the list to receive your club publication, so it's name can be included in the list we are preparing.

job, and we like the way he does it." Could there be a better answer?

A city of around 600,000 inhabitants, with some 16 private courses scattered within a radius of 15 miles, provides Leoffler with all the patronage he can use on his public golf enterprises in Washington. It isn't unusual on a Sunday to see 1,200 players start at East Potomac Park, with its four 9-hole courses, or to see 1,000 start at Rock Creek Park. The rates, cheaper than in almost any city for good golf, are as follows: 15 cents for 9 holes and 25 cents for 18 holes on week-days; 25 cents for 9 holes and 50 cents for 18 holes on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.

One Success Secret In Maintenance Budget

"We figure," Leoffler says, "that the secret in operating public golf courses is to give them just as good or better than they can get at a club. We figure our maintenance costs at about \$1,000 a hole a year.

"The best advertising medium for a public golf course is plenty of tournaments, which the newspapers are always interested in, thereby keeping the public interested."

Golf alone won't satisfy them all. So Leoffler operates, in addition to the usual restaurants at all his courses, driving ranges and putting courses. He has 45 driving tees at East Potomac Park, the backbone of the Leoffler enterprises, two practice putting greens and one of those nearly-extinct operations—a Tom Thumb course. Miniature golf isn't dead, either. Leoffler figures his Tom Thumb courses pay handsome dividends. His latest ven-

ture is a mammoth swimming pool, which probably won't be built this year, but will be in operation in 1937.

Quite a jump for a guy who started his business career fifteen years ago peddling lunch boxes from a little buggy. But Leoffler, if you can judge by the remarks of his patrons, deserves it all. The rotund, stubby little public links czar has played ball with the golfers. They think he has done a good job, and their patronage is the answer.

If you figure, as you must, that public golf is the incubator for the private clubs, Papa Leoffler should have a vote of thanks from many of the swanky clubs which festoon the country in nearby Virginia and Maryland. Of course you couldn't put a finger on it, but probably half the members of those clubs today first were nudged by the golf bug at one of the Leoffler courses.

Lousy Condition, Little Play Brings Muny Course Probe

EXPLANATION that budget enabled him to employ only 4 men on Wilson Park. Pontiac (Mich.) muny course, was advanced by City Engineer Lewis M. Wrenn, in charge of course, when park commissioners investigated report that poor condition of course is responsible for decrease in play. Fee and private courses in vicinity are having big increase in players.

Commissioners and city manager passed by the suggestion that Dr. James L. Tyson, head of soils dept., Michigan State college and noted golf turf authority, make inspection and recommendations. Tyson was selected by Detroit District GA to survey and report on turf at DDGA member clubs.

R. W. Ellingham Dies—R. W. Ellingham who designed the PGA clinic tools in association with Jim Gallagher, died at his home in Springfield, Mass., Aug. 22, after a brief illness from food poisoning.

Ellingham was born in Ely, Eng., 63 years ago and came to the US at the age of 10. He was prominent for many years in Eastern industrial fields, and for the last 15 years was active in New England golf. He was president of the Franconia GC at the time of his death.

Ellingham contributed greatly to the modernization of the pro-shop bench and was highly esteemed by veterans and younger men in pro ranks. His sons, Stanley and Harold, will continue the Ellingham Tool Co. business.