

## "Munys" Boost Golf

By A. T. Comstock

Besides adding thousands of players to the game each year, the muny courses kept many other thousands playing golf right through the worst of the Depression.

GOLF reached the point where it was ready to become a recreation for the average American citizen just at the time our citizens and city governments were willing to accept one by one the necessity for adult recreation and provide for it. Having established the necessity for opportunities for play for children and then for adults and having established the fact that golf is the best of all recreations for adults, it became necessary to convince many people that golf was a legitimate business for a city to engage in. Many private and public fee courses felt the municipal course was a menace to their well-being.

It is most fortunate for golf, and I mean the welfare of the sport as a whole, that the municipal courses were ready and fully established when the depression years of the 'thirties' arrived. In a very rough way golf might have been divided into three classes in accordance with the expense involved. First, the private clubs, secondly the public fee courses, and thirdly the municipal courses representing the least cost for the player.

### Muny Golf Less Expensive

As the depression became more and more acute many from the private clubs were forced to drop back to the less expensive golf. The municipal links have

taken these golfers, have given them, for the most part, splendid facilities, have kept their interest in golf, and some day will return these players to the private clubs and fee courses, and promote a new crop.

The municipal courses have made, right through the depression, thousands of new golfers. Many of these golfers are young men and women just out of high school and college ready to enter business. They will eventually join and constitute the private clubs in the future.

### Private, Fee Business Not Hurt

The municipal club of today, as far as I have been able to decide, has not in any way cut into the legitimate business of any private or fee course. If the cheaper municipal golf had not been available the golf would just not have been played.

One very important fact should be noted in this connection. Everyone of the thousands of new golfers drawn to the city links during these depression years has purchased clubs, balls, and other equipment required. The business end of golf, the industry of supplying the many needs of the golfer, has surely been helped immeasurably during the years it needed help the most.

The many thousands of new golfers made by the municipal links will be legi-

timate game for the private and fee courses and they will flock to them in droves. My advice is for these courses to get their houses ready to receive them.

Many of the early city courses were constructed on flat, featureless situations. This was a decided mistake. Public courses should not be make-believe courses and there is no reason why they should be very different from private courses. The idea of the country club type of city links is now well established. The new golfers are mostly young folks. They are smart and they learn quickly. It is the old story of the baseball player over again. The star of the sand lot yesterday is the Big Leaguer today. The average golfer on the city links today plays almost the same game as his brother on the private courses.

The problems of maintenance of city courses are much more severe and varied than on the private links. Every effort should be made to speed play and this can be done best by avoiding those things which cause delay. Chief of these is hunting for lost balls. The rough on a city course should not be difficult. Long grass should be avoided and the rough cut oftener. It is not necessary to widen fairways excessively. Observation will show where the most difficulty from lost balls is had and extra attention to the rough at these points is advisable. Not to make the play easy but to make it easier to find the ball quickly.

#### Avoid Excessive Trapping

The beginner will appreciate it if the fairway is mowed right up to the tee. This will speed play tremendously. Excessive trapping should be avoided and the traps should not be too difficult.

Pile-ups of players generally occur at the one shot holes. A one shot hole requiring considerable skill to stay on the green should not be made more difficult by means of traps. Have your well-trapped greens on the longer holes where there is less congestion. Add traps as your patrons become more skilled or as the players and condition show your need for them.

Large greens are a decided advantage on a city course as they give additional cup locations, allowing more frequent changes and greater time for recovery. Greens with too abrupt rolls should be avoided as they are difficult to maintain, where there is heavy play. Do not have more than two difficult or trick greens in the 18; if you must have them, place

where congestion is the least likely to happen.

There seems to be some difference of opinion among city authorities on the best method of collecting fees. Some city courses prefer a straight fee only. The advantage of this method seems to be in the greater revenue received. Most municipal courses, however, have a yearly membership fee combined with a daily green fee for the transient player or the player who does not want the yearly membership.

The advantage of this system seems to be in the fact that the members attach themselves to the course, play their golf there and take an interest in the place. It is their golf course. Each and every one of these members constitute a course officer in themselves and are a great aid in proper conduct on the course.

#### Don't Make Golf Too Cheap

I do not feel that golf should be made too cheap. Nor should it be too expensive. I doubt the advisability of making golf pay a profit and the profit used to carry on other park activities. It should be made to pay its own way absolutely and possibly a little more for good measure. A yearly fee as low as \$10 for the better municipal courses seems to me to be too small. If a larger membership charge obtains surplus revenue, it would seem that the excess could be best applied to improving the course. The revenue also might be allowed to accumulate and applied to the building of additional holes or practice greens and fairways.

I think you will be interested in our experience in constructing a municipal golf course at Lynn (Mass.) in the Lynn Woods. The Lynn Woods, a city park since 1888, consists of more than 2,000 acres of rough woodland right at the city's door. This area in Colonial days was held in common and was the source of much of the wood for fuel and timber for construction.

Several years ago in endeavoring to make the Lynn Woods more useful to the citizens of Lynn, the suggestion was made that a golf course be constructed. It seemed that here was the opportunity to make this valuable area very useful and to provide adult recreation so much needed in our highly industrial city. In the summer of 1930 work was started.

The first nine holes went into play August 19, 1931, and the second since July 22, 1933.

The undertaking was taken up at first

to provide employment. Conditions not improving in the spring of 1931, welfare labor was used. The workers gave one or more days per week in return for their welfare orders.

In the early winter of 1933 the CWA continued the work of improving the course, also supplying the labor to construct a fully equipped clubhouse. For this club, however, the city of Lynn supplied all material, the CWA the labor only. Under ERA the work of improvement of fairways and rough continued.

Many municipal golf courses are equipped with convenient clubhouses whose facilities are available during the winter months to clubs and other social organizations which otherwise could not have suitable places for their evening parties. I mention this because it is quite well known that such social functions can

be carried on in city-supervised property on a very much better and more wholesome atmosphere than is possible in many privately hired locations. Well conducted dances can be carried on in such city golf clubhouses which will offer a counter attraction to the ordinary dance hall or road house.

Winter sports on municipal golf courses is entirely feasible in New England and the more northerly states. Skiing and snowshoeing under proper snow conditions attract hundreds. Skating and tobogganing can be had at small expense.

The popularity of golf both public and private has been increased tremendously and the game has profited greatly by the activity of municipalities in the sport. No other single effort in recent years has done so much for community recreation as has municipal golf.

## Are Weeds Your Trouble?

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**TURF** is man's attempt to clothe the soil with a covering of grass to suit his purpose. Weeds are nature's way of clothing the soil when man's turf covering is insufficient to compete with the forces of nature. Plants are weeds only in man's definition and as they interfere with his pleasures or cause him a loss of revenue in his vocation.

Grasses that are used for turf are really abused. They no longer develop as nature intended them to develop but are kept in an abnormal condition by constant bruising, maiming and mutilation. Under such circumstances many plants perish or are so weakened that weeds come in to take their places. To the spoiled eye of the golfer, this is unsightly—so weeds must go. That is the reason we have been forced to develop modern methods of weed control. In the past two decades a vast improvement has been made in American grasses by the discovery of improved strains for existing conditions, so when weeds show up it is an indication that something is wrong with the cultural methods.

Weed control is accomplished through,

and is synonymous with, sanitation. This word is all-inclusive of all the devices used to produce the perfect turf. At the start, the greenkeeper is looking for trouble if he uses topsoil or a seed bed that is not free of weed seed. Several methods are available to attain this end: sterilization with steam, dry heat or chloropicrin; exhaustion of the weed seedlings by fallowing or continuous cultivation; the growing of a cover crop to cause great vertical competition to smother out unwanted growth; and by maintaining the rational fertilizer level with accompanying maximum physical condition.

### Be Sure of Your Seed

The quality, purity and cleanliness of seed should be beyond question, for many weeds may be introduced by using unclean or contaminated seed. Time of seeding so the grass seedling will not enter into competition with the weeds must be considered, as well as the rate and method of seeding.

After the turf is up, sanitation requires that the strictest attention be paid to liming and fertilizer practices. The proper height of the cut for the area planted must be determined and strains developed

\*Paper at Maryland State Short Cse.