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Wakonda—Des Moines' Pride

While far from being one of the older clubs of the state, Wakonda has risen in the last few years to be classed one of the nation's outstanding clubs

By Chet Billings

MEMBERS and officers of the Wakonda CC in Des Moines, Ia., have long been proud of their clubhouse and course facilities but they were even more elated this spring when the National Collegiate Athletic Assn. selected the club as the scene for the 1939 national tournament to be staged from June 26 to July 1.

When the college players assemble for their annual bid for individual and team championships, they will see an 18-hole layout built across wooded, rolling hills with five small lakes extending through the course. They will see, too, an elaborate clubhouse and an irregularly shaped swimming pool, one of the first to be constructed by a private club in the Midwest.

Service Is Keynote

Behind this scene, however, lies a story of the far-sighted program adopted by the Wakonda club to gain its position as one of the outstanding clubs in the Midwest. Officers of the club cannot put their fingers on any specific policy or plan which has resulted in continual improvement of the course and clubhouse, but they agree that excellent service in every department of the club to every member of the club may be the principal answer.

As golf clubs go, Wakonda isn't ancient, having been organized less than 18 years ago. Financially, however, the club has been and is now as solvent as any organization which might have sprung up with the golf game in this country. Actually an offshoot of the now disbanded Golf and Country Club in Des Moines, Wakonda was organized when the former club did not renew its lease on its site in the residential district on the west side of Des Moines. A farm, well sprinkled with oaks and elms and located just inside the city limits in the south section of the city, was purchased by the stockholders of the newly-organized Wakonda CC in 1921. Designed by the American Park Builders, the course was opened for play in the summer of 1922. The clubhouse was completed in December of the same year.

$600,000 Is Property Investment

"Wakonda now has a property investment amounting to $600,000," says G. R. Locke, who has been secretary, treasurer and manager of the club since its inception. "Four hundred shares of common stock valued at $600 are now outstanding in addition to 150 shares of $300 preferred stock."

Since 1932, possession of stock has not

Receipts of $30,000 in the dining room and beverage sales amounting to $14,000 during 1938 indicate the solid condition of house operations at Wakonda. View of clubhouse is from south.

been obligatory for club members, but the officials hope to have the club back to that point sometime in the future. "Now we ask only a year's dues," Locke said, "and any member may resign or be cancelled out at the end of the year."

Six Membership Classifications

An unusual feature of the membership is the fact that six distinct classifications have been created. Individuals under 30 years of age may obtain a junior-junior membership for $75 a year. This entitles the member and his immediate family to all club privileges. In 1938, there were 50 such members. The junior membership is for persons from 30 to 35 years of age, and amounts to $90 a year. Fifty such memberships were sold last year, according to Locke.

Two classifications have been created for persons over 35 years. One is the social membership for everything except golfing privileges and amounts to $125 annually. There were 75 in this group in 1938. The other classification entitles the member to all club privileges and amounts to $180 annually. By far the most popular classification of membership, 200 of the latter were in effect last year.

Special and non-resident are the remaining two classifications. The former was established to accommodate officials from the state capitol buildings in Des Moines as well as U. S. Navy officials and U. S. Army officials from the Fort Des Moines army post. Twenty special memberships at $90 a year were in effect in 1938. The non-resident group included 20 persons last year, each paying $50 annually.

"The junior and junior-junior memberships have been in effect for eight years," Locke disclosed. "We feel they have been a fine thing for the club as well as the individuals. Such memberships enable the young people to form contacts which they could not possibly otherwise make."

Wakonda has played its part in building up Des Moines as "The Convention City of the Middlewest." During 1938, there were 293 conventions of state, regional or national importance held in Iowa's capital city. Attracted to those conventions were approximately 365,000 persons who spent an estimated amount of $3,500,000.

Wakonda Welcomes Conventions

As a civic duty, Wakonda has made its facilities available to all the major conventions. Banquets, luncheons, dinners, dinner dances and bridge parties have been held in the clubhouse while hundreds of convention visitors have played over the golf course and have swam in the pool.

Dinners range from one to two dollars, advises Locke, while luncheons are 75 cents to $1.50. Green fees are $1.50 on weekdays and $2.00 on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.

One of the features of the clubhouse is a ballroom which can accommodate 400 diners at a banquet. Smaller dining rooms are used during the winter months. A staff of approximately 40 persons is on duty during the summer months while 12 are retained during the winter. "Cafe receipts amounted to approximately $30,000 last year while beverage sales reached $14,000," Locke disclosed.

Locker-room facilities for the college players will be ample, with 350 lockers and 16 showers in the men's side and 150

lockers and eight showers in the women's side.

Wakonda's pride in its golf course will probably not be dampened by many sub-par rounds during the forthcoming collegiate firing. While this tournament will be the first national meet ever to be held in Iowa, entrants in past state and regional tournaments at Wakonda have been only mildly successful in administering occasional lickings to par.

Two men's Trans-Mississippi tournaments have been staged at Wakonda. Art Bartlett of Ottumwa, Iowa, won in 1928, when he started a sensational final round with 11 putts on 10 greens. Johnny Goodman of Omaha, Neb., former National Open and National Amateur champ, copped the honors in 1934. In 1933, Phyllis Buchanan of Denver won the women's Trans-Mississippi at Wakonda. In addition to those three major tournaments, the course has been host to countless state amateur and state open meets as well as its usual quota of city tournaments.

Wakonda's Greens Are O. K.

Serving in a dual capacity as professional and greenkeeper is Jack Welsh, who has been at the club since its inauguration. He now has two assistants in the pro-shop and a crew of from 12 to 15 working on course maintenance. Welsh, who is nationally-recognized for his ability as a greenkeeper, is proud of Wakonda's greens. All have Washington bent. "Our average green measures 7,000 sq. ft., almost 1,500 sq. ft. larger than the national average," Welsh declared. "Sixty traps are scattered throughout the course and protect all greens except Nos. 4, 6, 11 and 14, where we have grass hollows. This year we are putting 650 cu. yds. of new sand into the 60 traps."

The tees, some of which are built in three elevations, contain from 2,000 to 2,500 sq. ft. A watering system extending down all fairways permits watering of the course at least twice weekly and more often if weather conditions demand. Included in the watering system are approximatly 40,000 yards of mains. Plenty of fertilizer is used on the fairways to insure a good turf.

A chain of small lakes, fed from natural springs, runs across the course. The fairways on Nos. 5, 10, 17 and 18 take the golfer across these lakes while fairway 16 runs parallel to one of them. Native limestone spillways have been constructed to connect the chain of lakes, at the head of which is the elaborate swimming pool.

With a par of 37-36—73, the course measures 6,416 yards. The first nine has four par 4 holes, three par 5's and two par 3's and measures 3,242 yards. The second nine measures 3,174 yards with five par 4's, two par 5's and two par 3's. Longest hole on the course is the 529-yard 13th while the shortest is No. 17, 115 yards.

Since the club normally has some 250 caddies available for its membership, the list will probably be only slightly augmented to accommodate the college players, Welsh indicated. The regular caddie fee ranges from 80 cents to $1.00, dependent on the caddie's grade, while a flat rate of $1.25 is in effect for tournaments.

Officials Like Their Jobs

While Wakonda believes its club to be unique for having retained its secretary-treasurer-manager and its pro-greenkeeper since its establishment, it is also proud of the continuity of service on the part of uncompensated officials. Fred P. Carr has served as chairman of the green

Wakonda's swimming pool, which frequently carries a capacity load, is said to be one of the Midwest's earliest private club pools. Natural springs supply fresh water constantly.

committee since the organization of the club and has worked closely with Jack Welsh in the building of the course. E. H. Mulock has been chairman of the house committee for 10 years. Now in his third term as president of the club and chairman of the board of directors is the popular Paul Beer, while M. S. Denman is serving as vice-president.

Mute evidence of the business-like manner in which the club's affairs have been conducted is the operating statement for 1938, which reveals a net profit of $7,654.32. Total income, including dues, locker rental and profit on cigars, beverages, etc., amounted to $63,905.42. The total expense amounted to $49,845.21. This figure included expense for the house, cafe, golf, swimming, entertainment, taxes, insurance and interest. With a net operating profit of $14,060.21, the depreciation was figured at $6,405.89 to bring the net profit down to $7,654.32.

All in all, Wakonda can easily be cited as a good, solid, smart example of a well operated club in a midwestern metropolis. Its members have ample reason to be proud of it.

WHAT PLANT TISSUE TESTS TELL

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SINCE we must use raw materials, like phosphorus, nitrogen, potash and calcium, along with water, carbon dioxide, and so on, to make vegetables or grass, we are always confronted with the problem of getting adequate and proper amounts and balances of these materials for a growing plant to perform satisfactorily. As far as the soil and the problem as related to the soil is concerned, you get into difficulties in the supplying of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potash. Primarily, they will give you the greatest amount of concern in the growing of grasses.

The agronomists have become quite interested in soil tests, and I want to discuss soil testing with you. One limitation in soil testing is that you take a soil sample, dissolve out the phosphorus and potash, and then you measure with the devices that come with the various soil test kits, thereby finding high or low phosphorus or potash, as the case may be; but the thing you still do not know for sure is whether the amount of phosphorus or potash you get by the soil test method is the amount the 'plant can get hold of.' That is the problem you run into.

Test for Nutrient Deficiencies

On the other hand, if we go into the consideration of the possibilities which lie in the field of testing the plant tissue to find the nutrient deficiencies, as far as nitrogen, phosphorus, and potash are concerned, we find the plant tissue test method may help us a great deal.

In the plant tissue test you take a sample of the clipped grass, put it in a small vial, put the reagent to it, develop a certain color, and these colors tell whether you have or don't have the phosphorus or potash; and in the case of nitrogen we actually macerate a little of the grass tissue on a little porcelain plate and add the proper reagents. You may or may not get a color, depending on whether nitrogen is in the plant.

Test Technique Is Simple

The technique of the plant tissue test is simple. The directions with the kit are all written and the test technique is merely "cook book" procedure. The difficulty comes, however, in making your interpretation.

For an example of how we might interpret the results we are getting with the plant tissue tests, let's take a soil in which the available nitrogen content is low and the phosphate content and potash content are about medium. Taking a soil which has that condition, let's see what we could expect the plant tissue test to show.

But first, in order to get over this idea of what the plant tissue test would show, let's take along an analogy to explain the thing. The plant is somewhat like a factory, and the nitrogen, phosphates and potash we can liken to materials which are coming in on conveyors. One brings in nitrogen, one phosphates, and another

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