

## Brackenridge Pays Its Way

By John L. Mortimer

An excellent golfing terrain and popularity of the season ticket plan are chief reasons for the fine record established by this municipal course, scene of the Texas Open.

**O**PERATION of a municipal golf course at a profit every year—and this goes back to the time the course was built years ago—may not be particularly unique, but it turns out to be a pretty fair record in a city of some 300,000 that must also figure on the upkeep of 62 individual parks. Nevertheless, that is the practical and inviting record of Brackenridge Park GCse in San Antonio, Texas. Every year the city fathers are able to chalk up a surplus on the operation of the Brackenridge course.

Murray Brooks, the managing director at Brackenridge, can flip you a couple of sure-fire reasons for Brackenridge's success without batting an eye. His books back him up.

The two features which are most important are the park's natural setting and the system of fees levied on the players. Both stereotyped nominations, to be sure, but look into Brackenridge's situation:

### Nature Kind to Brackenridge

The Brackenridge course lies in the heart of a beautiful natural setting for a municipal course. The vast park, of which the course is a part, was a gift to the city. The course, naturally, is tax-free. Amid groves of elm, pecan, hackberry, oak and chinaberry trees the crystal clear San Antonio river follows an intricate, meander-

ing course, its surface punctuated with beautiful water lilies, its banks lined with flowers and reeds.

Crossing and criss-crossing this stream lie the fairways of the Brackenridge course, with scenic paths and bridges laid to the greens, squirrels hopping about among the trees, the grass perpetually brilliant green.

### Season Tickets Cost \$10

The Brackenridge course issues seasonal cards for \$10, which entitle the holder to play all the golf he wants to at any time. These cards are issued twice a year, May 1 to Oct. 31, and Nov. 1 to April 30. For the man who plays golf three times a week, this represents an average cost of 13 cents a game—without regard for the number of holes played. During the winter season approximately 200 of these cards are sold, and during the summer season, approximately 275 more.

The daily fees to the casual players are low—50 cents for 18 holes up to 5 p. m., 25 cents for as many as you can play after 5 p. m. Usually the office worker who gets off at 5 p. m., at least eight months of the year can get in from 12 to 18 holes of golf before darkness.

San Antonio is a famous center for winter golfers. Scores, perhaps hundreds, come to San Antonio every winter with no



Brackenridge clubhouse, built in 1923 and open only to golfers, has been constantly improved, and today represents an investment of \$75,000.

other idea in mind than all-year golf. The majority of these are above 60 years of age.

But these do not keep the course up. Neither do the hundreds of army officers and their families who live in San Antonio, for there are now two army golf courses, along with four other major courses within a short distance of the heart of the city. It is the average player who makes the Brackenridge course a success, according to Brooks.

Located a mile north from the heart of San Antonio, Brackenridge is within easy access of anyone who wants to play in a hurry. Likewise, the north side is the home of the golfing population, and Brackenridge, so close at hand, offers an easy inducement.

A few years ago another municipal course was built—Riverside—on the far south side. That course took \$9,000 yearly off the Brackenridge income, but likewise, it took away the heavy traffic. The income

at Brackenridge during the past five years has varied from \$20,000 to \$25,000 annually. Some years are better than others, but so far as Murray Brooks can tell there is no particular reason for this. An indication of the past year's income may be taken from a report filed Dec. 1 by Brooks, which listed revenue total for six months, up to Dec. 1, of \$13,110. Last year, including the payment of all expenses, Brackenridge turned over to the city a surplus of \$4,000.

#### Operates As Municipal Entity

The expenses at Brackenridge cannot, of course, be compared with those of the other municipal course, since Brackenridge operates as a municipal entity. Brooks, manager of the Brackenridge Park golf course department, reports directly to Henry Hein, city parks commissioner, and Brooks' revenues are turned in to the city treasury. He does not have the authority to spend any large sums, but he can obtain that authority by action of the city council, so long as it does not interfere with the budget of the parks department.

He does have the authority to spend according to the mandate laid down by the city charter—amounts up to \$100—but beyond that figure the city must advertise for bids.

That situation does not offer a problem, however, since Brooks has received unusual cooperation from the civic government in San Antonio. When he needs additional work or supplies he merely requisitions them through the city parks department, which acts as the quartermaster.

Principal expenses are for the Texas

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"The Fairway," exceedingly lively and interesting magazine of the Glen Oak CC (Chicago district) recently contained a yarn that was a swell subtle job of lesson selling. The story was headed "Dirty Trick" and told of a 15-handicap member whose game had collapsed. The ailing one took a lesson from By Chamberlain, Glen Oak's pro. A few days later a foursome was arranged in which By and his pupil were opponents. The pupil shot a net 70. The Fairway gives the financial statement:

"Collected from By.....	\$4.25
"Cost of lesson .....	\$2.00
"Profit .....	\$2.25

"How can By live? ? ? ?" asks the Fairway.

Open in February, for salaries, and for upkeep of the course. For instance, the annual grass seed bill is \$1,000; the commercial fertilizer bill runs to about \$1,000 a year. Some amount of trouble has been encountered in upkeep of the greens because of the alkali content of the soil. This has added a \$600 yearly bill for chemicals.

The course installed its own water system at an initial cost of \$18,000, taken from its surplus earnings. The course borders on two 24-in. mains, both within a stone's throw of the water towers, and there is never any problem of getting all the water needed.

There is no charge for water, since the course is within the city limits, and this represents a saving of more than \$3,000 a year. The San Antonio CC course, only a short distance away, pays about \$4,000 a year for water, according to Brooks.

The golf course is not carried on the balance sheet with any sort of valuation figure, since it was a donation. Still, the clubhouse at Brackenridge, opened in 1923, represents an investment of \$75,000, and stands as a monument to the golf course.

#### No Watering in Winter

Last year at the Texas Open there was some discussion regarding dry greens on the course, but it was not entirely due to the extended drought Texas had been experiencing. Brooks has installed tropical grass on the entire course. During the winter the grass lies dormant, and it will deteriorate if watered.

The full length of the course is 6,500 yards. It has eight natural water hazards, occasioned by the San Antonio river. A feature facilitated by the natural setting at Brackenridge is a fine arrangement of holes. Since Brooks came to Brackenridge 16 years ago, 17 greens have been completely rebuilt, the water system installed, the clubhouse erected and fairways lengthened and improved.

At present there is a \$12,000 improvement program under way, in which rock houses will be built in several parts of the course, and rock bridges and walks in-

stalled. Since the new city administration in San Antonio took office last May 1 a tree surgeon has been put to work on the fine groves of the park.

The Texas Open, which will be played Feb. 9-12, is expected to draw 150 professionals again this year. Likewise, the event touches off the course's three busiest



Murray Brooks,  
Brackenridge's golf director

months, February, March and April. Last year, the expenses of the meet, including the \$5,000 purse, totalled about \$6,000. With a gallery of 10,000, a surplus profit of \$2,000 was chalked up.

The Texas Open, held first in 1920, was established with a \$5,000 purse at the outset, and at that time its purse was one of the very largest offered on any course in the entire world. There has been some talk in recent years of increasing the figure.

**New Orleans Set for Tourney**—Third Annual New Orleans \$10,000 Open golf tournament will be held February 22-25, just in between the close of the Mardi Gras and the opening of the spring Fiesta celebrations. The New Orleans Open has become one of the country's major sport events. The first and second tournaments were successful in every respect and the 1940 tournament is expected to draw record galleries because of the large number of visitors and tourists who will be in New Orleans at this time.

Robert S. Maestri, mayor of the city of New Orleans, is again donating the prize money of \$10,000, a tournament sum that is not topped by any purse in the South. As usual, no gallery fees will be charged the public. The event will take place at the municipally-owned City Park Golf Course No. 1, where the golfers will have the use of the new \$85,000 City Park clubhouse.

Tampa (Fla.) Golf Assn. has collected 48 sets of used clubs from cheerful givers at member clubs. The assembled sets were passed on to high school youngsters who repaired the clubs in their own high school manual training dept. Harry Root, Jr., president of the Tampa GA, organized the junior promotion work.