

Hole-In-One Contest Puts Spotlight On a Club

By CHARLEY HOLLIS

Mgr., Redford (Mich.) Municipal Course

What are your chances of making a hole-in-one? Golfers have been working on that problem since the game was invented, and there are as many different answers as there are aces. At Redford, we've figured it this way. Our course has four holes under 175 yards, which means that each player gets four chances to achieve the acme of all golfing thrills. In 1946, 30,000 rounds of golf were played at Redford, which figure multiplied by four means that 120,000 attempts at a hole-in-one were made. Of these 120,000 tries only two were successful. In other words, at Redford, your chances of making an ace are one in 60,000.

Remote as your chances are of making one hole-in-one, how much further removed are your chances of making a second ace? Particularly when you must make your second ace under pressure, with three or four hundred onlookers, some newspaper reporters and photographers, and a host of fancy prizes combining to make that pressure! If your chances were pretty slim on that first ace, they have now been reduced to a mathematical possibility, to be sure, yet to the slenderest of all probabilities.

Yet no possibility can ever be too remote for the golfer, man or woman, small fry or old-timer, who has made a hole-in-one. What he did once, whether it was 50 years ago or 50 hours ago, he knows he can do again. And if witnesses are needed to verify this indomitable spirit of the American golfer, the 500 or so golfers who will enter the Detroit Hole-In-One Tournament this year will vouch for the "lightning sure can strike twice" theory.

It is on this theory that the Detroit News, in cooperation with the Department of Parks and Recreation, has built up the Hole-In-One Tournament as one of the major golf events in the Detroit district. Each year, as soon after Labor Day as is convenient, the most democratic tournament for that select aristocracy of golfdom is put on at Redford Municipal golf course. No. 8 hole, 137 yards, was chosen not only for its length, but

also because of its natural beauty, its sportiness, and its availability to roads and club-house. The tournament was so popular last year that it was immediately recognized that there just aren't enough daylight hours to give every entry his chance. So the event has been expanded to two days.

Fine Publicity for Course

The values of the tournament in good fellowship, in publicity for the course and for golf in general, in providing a swell wind-up for the season, and in providing plenty of fun, excitement, and thrills are endless. What has been done at Redford can be done elsewhere, and in outlining both the values and the organization of our tournament here, it is hoped that other courses in other districts will recognize equal benefits.

A major value that all participants (and audience too) remarked on last year is a value that cannot be measured in dollars and cents. It is even hard to find a name for it, but perhaps it is best indicated as good fellowship. Getting a hole-in-one is something like winning a fortune on the Irish Sweepstakes. It happens so rarely that if you don't make one yourself, you aren't jealous of the guy who does, in fact you're darned glad for him. At Redford, the spirit of Tournament Day is quickly infectious and the pleasant contagion makes it a gala day for winners and losers, workers and audience.

Some of the reasons for this fine feeling are hard to put one's finger on, but the following we have noticed here. Most importantly, perhaps, is the fact that the golfers who participate get the satisfaction of thinking again of that previous ace. Only those who have made a hole-in-one can enter, and when the golfer is announced and steps on the tee, he knows that he is the envy of the non-participating audience and the peer of the other entries. Thus whether he lands on the green or not, in his three tries, he gets the pleasurable recognition of knowing that his previous ace has been applauded.

Aside from this, however, there are many other elements that combine to

make Hole-In-One day a pleasant and memorable one. Golfers meet there from all over the district. Old-timers, who no longer get the old-time punch on their wood-shots, are in this tournament on a par with the small-fry. Beginners and pros have equal chances. Al Watrous, or Chick Harbert, or Jack Winney, or Sam Byrd may put all three balls within the three foot circle (though I'll cover all bets that they don't), but Joe Blow may play cross-handed, use a beat-up wooden-shafted spoon, bounce his ball off a tree, ricochet off the 9th tee ball-washer, and dribble up to three inches from the pin and be the winner (I'm also ready to cover these bets, by the way).

In fact, the secret of everybody's good time rests on the nature of the tournament itself. If the golfers who make a hole-in-one comprise the select aristocracy of the golfing kingdom, then this, the most democratic of tournaments, is successful because it puts the aristocrats back with the dubs again. At this tournament women are just as likely to roll 'em up and in as their parbusting husbands. Husbands and wives, boy friend and girl friend, grandpas and grandsons, and all in between have equal chances to duplicate the golfer's dream. And if one should duplicate it? Maybe we can find out from him what the golfer's heaven will be!

No Charge to Contestants

The best thing we at Redford have to say about the Hole-In-One Tournament is that we can have the fun of helping golf and golfers and at the same time benefit materially in a very handsome fashion. We do not charge entries or on-lookers at all, but we more than make up for this gratis event by the wealth of publicity that the tournament brings.

The Detroit Hole-In-One Tournament is a special promotion feature of the Detroit News. John Walters, golf editor of the News is an old hand at the Hole-In-One Tournaments (and an old-hand competitor too, ever since he made his ace a few years ago). As we have found the Hole-In-One helps us through increased players, so the News finds it a real go-getter in increasing circulation. For this reason alone, aside from the very great news-value of the event, any club, municipal or private, situated in a district where there is not already such a tournament presented, should have no difficulty in getting all the newspaper publicity desired.

The publicity values to the cause that offers a Hole-In-One Tournament are superlative. Golfers, whether participants or onlookers, get to know your course. At Redford this has been particularly valuable. The Dep't. of Parks and Rec-

reation took over this basically fine but sadly run-down course last year. During the war, the course had been open for play on and off, frequently on when it should have been off. Consequently, play was way down and the course had a bad rep. with the golfers in the district. The Hole-In-One Tournament brought the improved conditions to the golfing-public notice, and in spite of the worst golfing spring in my memory we are far ahead of last year's play.

Much of the cost of a Hole-In-One Tournament is the prize-expense. Yet even here, publicity helps. Actually the only cost to us at Redford is the labor cost. The long list of very handsome prizes is donated. A well-publicized event of this sort will quickly bring donors of prizes, for they too benefit from the publicity.

The value of publicity cannot be measured in immediate cash register sales, to be sure. In fact the best way to gauge the publicity value of the Hole-In-One Tournament to us is the amount and quality of print we received. On this level, in a representative year, we received the following amount of space in the Detroit News Sport Section: 21 full stories with 14 across-the-page headlines, 4 large block headlines, and 3 column headlines; 8 of these stories had pictures. These 21 pre-tournament articles each included an entry slip, and the last story gave the times at which the entries were to tee up. After the tournament there was a full spread of pictures and an account of the tournament, listing of prize-winners, etc.

No doubt we have been extremely fortunate at Redford in the matter of publicity, but the whole set-up of a Hole-In-One Tournament makes it a natural for any good sports writer anywhere. The tournament coming near the end of the golf season, but before the World Series and the football season, fills in nicely. The tournament itself gives the participating golfers and audience a swell chinning topic with which to approach the end of the season, and which is grist for the sports' columnist's mill. And the tournament itself has its full share of excitement and thrills. There always is the possibility that a hole-in-one will be made. The suspense of measuring the close-ones, the applause for a good shot, the groans when a ball rolls past the pin, all these plus the side-bets and friendly rivalry between golfers, the big-name boys that everyone knows, the players who have made an ace on the same hole before—such things make the Hole-In-One Tournament a field-day for the sports-writer.

But suppose your club has the publicity, has the prize-donors and the prizes, has a list of 300 entries more or less, how is the tournament itself organized? Inasmuch as the tournament is to be held at Redford for some years to come, we worked it down to a fairly routine system.

On the entry blank the golfer is asked to put down the time he would like to tee off. Within limits, the posting of starting time stays as close to that as possible, but advance warning is given that the early evening hours are crowded and first entry gets the time listed.

The day before the tournament the maintenance men set up the bleachers. In 1946 we had the bleachers at the tee, and most of the official activity took place there. Last year we tried another set of bleachers behind the green to handle the crowd. And at the end of the day the tee and the section adjacent to it were roped off. This precaution is necessary to avoid confusion on tournament day.

On the morning of the tournament Reuben Scott, the maintenance supervisor, and Steve Solomon, our greenkeeper, work fast to get everything set for the first attempt at 8 a.m. One of Steve's men switches the green, while Scotty and Steve prepare the powdered chalk and water mixture for making the circles around the pin. When the dew is off the green, the two-inch wide white strip is painted on the green. Three circles are made: the inside circle has a radius of 3 ft. from the pin (6 ft. in diameter); the second circle has a radius of 9 ft. from the pin (18 ft. in diameter); the outside circle has a radius of 15 ft. from the pin (diameter 30 ft.).

While the green is being fixed, official materials that have been stored in the club-house over night are brought out to the tee and set up. A few card tables, some chairs, the entry list, the golf balls to be used (and a couple of pails for totting the balls from green to tee); the prizes, a couple of megaphones, and a large blackboard (with plenty of chalk and that damn eraser that we always forget) are all that we have found essential. All of this is self-explanatory, except perhaps the blackboard. We use the blackboard to keep the audience posted on the best shots made so far, on the different prize levels,—the best shot, the best pro shot, the best left-hander, the best woman, etc.

Three Chances at Ace

By 8 a.m. everybody is set for the first player (who has been waiting around anyway). After some preliminaries (getting his picture taken, etc.), he is announced, given three balls (players used to get five tries before the entry list got

so large), and the first hole-in-one attempt of the day is started. He makes his three tries, and on the green the boys call back the results. On the tally sheet at the main table on the tee, we post results as follows: each entry has three squares after his name, in the first square we post how many balls he got on the green; in the second square we post how many balls he got in the outside circle; and in the third square we enter the distance of the closest ball to the pin. If he has two, or all three, balls within the inner circle, we add the distance for each (and this happens, too).

It sounds simple, and unlike most simple-sounding things, it is simple. In fact, the Hole-In-One Tournament is so simple that we recommend it as an ace promotion stunt for every golfing district. There is only one question that you or your club committee may ask—what do you do if it rains? It has rained at Detroit News Hole-In-Ones before it was held at Redford, and the tournament went on as all tournaments do.

Gentle Tone in Bulletins Gets Cooperation

Lake Shore CC (Chicago dist.) has the same problem almost every club has in getting members to heed deadlines for dinners. Mgr. Ed Newhart and the House committee have tried all manners of approach to solution of the problem and have found that the softest way is the most effective.

Club members just don't seem to like to be told they "must" but the job can be delicately done as a card mailed to Lake Shore members has proved.

The card was headed "A Friendly Rebuke." The message was:

"Are you one of those joyful souls who have been lingering over the Club bar beyond the 8:30 dead-line before dinner?"

"Have you been falling for that 'just one more round' routine when you know that where you really belonged was in the dining room? (Incidentally it is a very simple matter to order refreshments from the bar to be served at your table.)

"If you have been guilty of this agreeable offense, you have been unwittingly contributing to a very serious situation which threatens to disrupt the splendid service which we expect and have received from the Club's kitchen and dining room staff.

"It is most important that we observe the 8:30 rule when dining at the Club; your real cooperation in the future will be appreciated.

House Committee."