

Oklahoma Scoring Improved by Four-ball Competitions

By LAYMOND CRUMP

Oklahoma City has been America's Four-ball golf center for 12 years. The Daily Oklahoman and Oklahoma City PGA have cooperated in conducting the events throughout that time. Oklahoma City now also has the first women's Four-ball tournament as a little sister to the men's classic which drew a record 456 players in 1948.

Naturally, when the idea to give the feminine shooters a chance at the popular tournament came, there were Doubting Thomases.

And just as naturally, there was many a headache in getting the women to play. But finally the newest Four-ball, with play on a two-point scoring system — low ball and low total — came around with 94 players. Short of the goal of 150 players, it nevertheless was a good turnout considering that Oklahoma City's last city tournament had only 42 women competing.

Mrs. John Glosser, 1948 city champion, was talking with Laymond Crump of The Daily Oklahoman one day after the men's Four-ball had been completed with a record 2,000 spectators attending the finals at Twin Hills CC.

"Say," she queried, "when are you going to give us a break and let us play in a Four-ball tournament?"

That set the golf writer to thinking until he approached his sports editor, Hal Middlesworth, with the idea. Given the "green light," he called several key women and received an enthusiastic response. The Oklahoman and Times, sponsors of Golden Gloves, the Four-ball, two big bowling tournaments, a fishing derby and the biggest holiday basketball tournament in the nation, is always a sports booster.

The pros were in favor of the tournament and a meeting was called at which the Daily Oklahoman feted women's golf leaders and the pros of all city clubs to discuss the Four-ball, femme version. It was born at that meeting and \$260 in trophies were ordered the next day.

Realizing that only with the help of could be sold to the women good and the women themselves the tournament poor shooters alike, a women's eligibility committee was appointed to meet weekly with the pros and Crump, to screen entries.

Team Handicap was 50

The Central Oklahoma women's association, 153 members strong, showed that every woman averaged 110 strokes a round, which would be a handicap of 25. Therefore, a handicap minimum of 50 a team was set as the entry requirement.

The hard work of contacting every woman in the state and selling her the tournament idea was next. The handicap chairmen of all clubs in Oklahoma City on the eligibility committee helped. Overnight, it seemed that dozens of new women golfers began playing. Many couldn't make the 1948 tournament but said they were "practicing for the next one."

A total of 47 teams was reached, which, according to the original purpose in the minds of both the newspaper and the pros, was a fair start in promoting women's golf. Play was on Thursdays, in the morning when golf business in Oklahoma City was at its low ebb, thus boosting the greens fees once a week. Entry fee was \$2 a person, plus greens fees.

In order to sell the tournament and keep it like the men's, a consolation bracket was set up for all first-round losers, thus assuring every player at least two matches. Suitable trophies were awarded in this division as well as in the championship bracket.

At first the officials set up the meet on a low ball basis, but quickly found that the one-point system would not work. The girl or woman who takes 10 or 12 strokes on a hole, the very ones who should be encouraged to get into match play to help their games, was not getting any benefit out of the Four-ball. She would, if she played at all, put the ball in her pocket after a couple of impotent strokes

at each hole.

Therefore, through advice from the Central association leaders, the low ball, low total scoring system was invoked.

Now, instead of just attracting the few good players and a few more fairly low handicap shooters, the tournament was interesting to a couple of women each of whom had handicaps of 25. Or one with 20 and one with 30. They had a chance this way to win a match over a 6-handicap shooter who was teamed with a 50-shooter.

Entries came in fairly well considering the fact that many of the country club women were out of the city on long vacations, some of whom were still not back when the tournament started. The response was enough to make our officials think the women's Four-ball is here to stay. They expect it to be copied by enterprising pros and newspapers throughout the country. In time, Tulsa probably will copy it here in Oklahoma.

Stimulates Women's Golf

It should be a great stimulus to women's golf, which produces few enough good players. Given a reason to practice and to take lessons, perhaps thousands more

women in time will become capable tournament players. It can happen.

Going back to the men's Four-ball at Oklahoma City, it has been proven that dozens of men who were not good players when a Four-ball started have moved up to be par busters. Where they started out on a "piggyback" ride paired as 90 shooters with par shooters, in a couple of years, dozens have had enough experience and desire to play well enough to become the par shooters instead of the dubs.

The men's minimum team entry total is 164 strokes or more, in contrast to the women's 220 a round. Low ball play is the only way the men will ever compete, there being enough good men competitors to make up a field of 456 in Oklahoma City and the surrounding area.

When the men's Four-ball began in Oklahoma City, response was terrific and 315 teams entered. Then, as in the women's Four-ball now, entry was open to all Oklahoma players.

Tulsa liked the results and two years later started its own Four-ball, taking most of the northeastern and eastern por-



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tions of the state. Last spring the 10th annual Tulsa Four-ball, run at the same time as Oklahoma City's 12th annual meet, drew a record 248 teams.

As in Oklahoma City, where the newspapers and the pros cooperate fully to make the tournaments successful, in Tulsa, the Tulsa Daily World, with sports editor B. A. Bridgewater and the Tulsa section of the PGA do the promotion work on the huge tournament.

For the last six years interest has been helped by an inter-city series, home and home, between the Oklahoma City and Tulsa men's champions of the Four-ball. Never has a winning team refused to play in the state championship series. It works this way; whatever margin a team establishes in the first weekend of the series after 18 holes, is carried over — a regular 36-hole playoff. Tulsa has won twice, and Oklahoma City four times. The crowd interest is keen.

Oklahoma, with many golf tournaments and playable weather almost all the year round, is building more and more golf courses. Oklahoma City still is short of links, although Floyd Farley's new 18-hole Meridian layout has helped to decrease the shortage.

Promotes Fee Club Business

Play in both Four-ball meets generally is restricted to publunk courses until semi-finals or finals, or both, in order to keep the Country clubbers happy. Of course, the publunks usually want the business and in spite of a lot of work entailed at the starting tee, dollars pour in at the clubhouse and in pre-tournament practice rounds each week.

In the opinion of golfers, pros and newspaper officials alike, the Four-ball tournament, as proved in play by outstanding pro teams in more and more tournaments each year, is the coming stimulus to golf.

Oklahoma has led the way in amateur Four-ball setups, and annually the men's Four-ball is the greatest participation tourney in history in the state.

They think the women will build their tournament and conversely the tournament will build women's golf, in time. Now, it takes no sales talk to get men to play in the Four-ball. No golfer, good or fair, would think of passing up the tournament and from one to the other, the men are busy acquiring new partners.

Teams that reach the quarterfinals are broken up and not allowed to be teamed

up again. This gives every duffer a potential chance to play with the champion par-buster. In the men's play, pros are allowed to participate and yet only once in 22 tournaments, the 1946 Tulsa meet, has a pro been a member of the championship team. Morrie Gravatt of Tulsa CC made the grade with John Spencer, 100-shooting amateur, that year. Before the inter-city finals Spencer was 10 strokes better.

Bud Hoch and Troy Hoskins, a collegian and a radio announcer, respectively, won in Oklahoma City last year and took the inter-city series. At the outset Hoskins never had broken 80. Yet, the week after the Four-ball, he had practiced so diligently and acquired so much poise through play in the Four-ball, he was breaking par at tough Lincoln park and beating Hoch. No one protested that the team was unfair; it was perfectly legitimate at the outset. But Hoskins' improvement showed the good of the Four-ball that all Oklahomans know; it makes you practice.

The Four-ball, sold first to the newspaper and the pros as sound promotional timber, should flourish over the nation.

Perhaps, in time, a national Four-ball championship tournament of city amateur Four-ball champions can come of the Oklahoma beginning. It has the possibilities of becoming that big.

Remember — the hardest Four-ball is the first one. It's worth the effort.

USGA Works Itself Into the Red in 1948

USGA annual report for 1948 showed a loss of \$14,704 on year's operations for 1,280 members; largest membership in USGA history. Net increase in membership in 1948 was 155. Record entry lists of 5,970 for association's five championships, including the new USGA junior. Cost of Curtis cup trip overseas was \$7000. Income from championships was \$39,000 compared with \$48,000 in 1947. National Open income was about \$15,000 against \$19,000 previous year. Amateur and women's each did approximately \$1000 better than in 1947. USGA income from Amateur at Memphis was \$11,589 plus broadcasting income. Green section expense was \$35,127 covering most extensive and successful program in Green section history. Income from all sources for 1948 was \$102,770.