



Individual practice absorbs the interest of more than 50 members of a girl's golf class at Central high school in Minneapolis. Individual help and practice is combined with group instruction to give every class member the most training possible in the short course offered free to the seniors during the spring semester by the park board pros.

## Minneapolis Builds Munny Play With Free Winter Lessons

By WILLIAM GILBERTSON

Despite thick blankets of snow and ice covering every inch of grass in Minneapolis, the golf season for this northern city starts early—the first of February, usually—for thousands of local golfers.

As a result of the early start, the five Minneapolis public golf courses are always comfortably filled with hundreds of golfers when the warm balmy spring days roll around.

What's behind it?

It's the result of carefully-planned, early-season golf promotion and instruction through a plan first adopted in 1938 by the recreation division of the Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners, which after 16 successful years still enjoys ever-growing popularity.

Postwar recreation activity in this city has boomed, and golf has boomed right along with the rest. The boom in golf interest and the sound promotion program have built interest to the point where community golfers play near 200,000 rounds per year on the five public courses.

In 1938, golf in Minneapolis was suf-

fering from disinterest and play was low—a partial result of the after-effects of the depression years.

### Three-fold Program

To revive golf in the city, a three-fold program was put into effect.

The three-pronged attack included (1) free pre-season golf lessons for all comers, especially beginners, (2) club-organizing at the five city courses and (3) tournament promotion on a wide scale.

Recreation director Karl B. Raymond explains the purpose of the program was actually two-fold. He says:

"We wanted to bring back the popularity of golf and full use of our golf facilities, and we also wanted to utilize, in a worthwhile, year-round way, our professional managers. We believed we could build a better, more permanent base for a rising interest in golf and the use of our courses."

The program's first year, helped by favorable weather, saw the total rounds played increase to 150,413 for the season, a jump of 17,500 over the previous year.

In that first year, golf schools were

conducted at eight city community centers, beginning in March and continuing until the outdoor season started on the courses. A total of 590 attended those first lessons and another 3,250 viewed films on golf.

Ninety-seven tournaments were conducted in the first year to build up interest in golf.

Since that first encouraging year, the program has been carried on every winter without a break. Attendance and participation were hindered some years by cold, rainy golf seasons, the second World War and other ups and downs.

The war's end saw a big build-up in golf's popularity from recreation-starved war veterans and civilians alike. By 1948, Minneapolis golfers were playing 203,208 rounds in one season at only five courses. That was topped by 203,784 rounds in 1950.

Throughout its 16-year history, the golf promotion program has been improved considerably and many of the weaknesses eliminated.

#### High School Short Course Added

In 1946 a formerly-neglected goldmine of prospective golfers was welcomed into the program for the first time with the addition of a high school short course in golf taught by the same park board pros who were teaching the winter pre-season golf lessons at the centers.

Fitting the park board's golf instruction into the high school program gave very little trouble. The golf lessons, once per week for three weeks, were given during regular physical education hours, with the very helpful and interested cooperation of the school faculty. The schools were pleased to have experienced professionals teaching golf fundamentals to their students. Golf proved to be a very popular and healthy addition to their program.

Co-educational classes were attempted for a time at one school but were soon found less effective than separate classes. Beginning golfers were far less distracted and absorbed far more golf when in class with members of their own sex.

At present, the high school program starts the first week in February with the beginning of a new spring semester in the schools.

The three park board pros teach golf in all 11 of the city high schools, usually limiting classes to only senior boys and girls. Three men alone couldn't possibly teach all sophomores, juniors and seniors. They've more than enough golf pupils with only the seniors.

An all-city total of 3,000 boys and girls, each of which is to receive three lessons, makes careful, tight scheduling essential in order to fit in all schools. Classes av-

erage about 50 pupils. Fifty minute periods are the standard.

#### Free Golf Schools for Public

Meanwhile, popularity of the free golf schools for the public at the community centers grows yearly. Some expedient changes have been made since the first trial in 1938.

Instead of the original eight different centers, classes for 1952 were conducted in only three convenient centers, located to draw beginning and veteran golfers from all over the city. Columbia Manor serves the north section, Loring park center, in the heart of the loop, attracts many of the nearby apartment dwellers, and Nicollet field center operates in the south district of the city.

Free lessons at these three centers begin in mid-February, about two weeks after those in the schools. Classes at each center are held evenings at 6:45 and 8:15 p.m.

Class-size at the centers also averages about 50 golfers each, with two separate classes per night timed so working people have a choice of hours.

For the first time this year, two separate series of three lessons for each center were conducted, the second series following as soon as the first three-week set had finished. Formerly, only one series of four was held at each center.

The change was made to eliminate a "drag" effect always encountered in the four-session series. Good first-night classes would show up for the first of the four sessions and receive their preliminary lesson—usually films and simple introductory explanations. Golfers returning home that night would tell friends about the fun they were having and the golf lessons they were getting free. Presto! The second weekly session of the four almost always doubled, with at least half of the people coming for the first time. This required repeating the whole introductory process and slowing up the rest of the class.

Now, when first-nighters enjoy their lessons (which is frequent), they may suggest to friends, "Why don't you start the second series?" Delay and repetition are eliminated and the word also spreads more widely. The three instructing pros believe as much can be taught in three lessons without any delays as was formerly possible with four and much back-tracking.

The second series also benefits from larger crowds as approaching golf weather turns the public fancy once more to green, grassy fairways soon to be seen.

More than 600 golfers for the two series were taught this season at the centers, 300 in each series.

Instruction in the schools and at the

centers for the adults is much the same. More previous golf experience is found among those pupils at the centers, which allows starting more advanced instruction with certain students.

In the schools, very few (seldom more than one or two out of a class of 50) have had any previous experience in golf, while the rates at the centers run to about 40 to 45 per cent. Age limits at the centers are not strictly observed, but only a serious interest and a reasonably good ability to absorb the training are required.

### 3,600 Beginners Get 10,000 Lessons

Totaling up the individual pupils from these two sources, the schools and community centers, we have over 3,600 avid golf students, most of them beginners. Multiply that by the three lessons which each receives in only two short months.



This trio has taught over 63,000 individual lessons in the Minneapolis park board's free golf school program since its start in 1938. (L to R) Donald Nelson, Lake Hiawatha GC, Fred Herrmann, Francis Gross GC and Paul Elmer, Meadowbrook GC.

How would you, aided by only two others, teach this total 10,800 lessons. It's really not so tough. Minneapolis' three park pros have taught that many yearly for 16 winter seasons now.

The secret is the use of both group and individual instruction.

Here's the plan.

Standard procedure is to start with films on golf fundamentals, the history of golf, golf etiquette and other subjects obtained from the films of the National Golf Foundation.

Next the students watch actual demonstrations of these same points by instructors standing before the group. Slow careful explanation is essential. Questions from the pupils are welcomed, often asked, and little is overlooked as a result.

Next the class turns to individual practice. Each goes over what he's seen in the movies and demonstrations and copied right along himself. Every student is

watched and carefully checked for proper form in all fundamentals, including the stance, grip, addressing the ball, swing, putting, and driving.

"How do you start around the course" or "Who has first turn on the greens?" Customs and general golf etiquette on the courses are also well covered in demonstrations, talks and questioning periods.

The three instructors manage to get to every pupil in every class during every lesson with very rare exceptions. They check each through his paces to be sure he develops a good firm idea of what's right and what isn't. That's the main purpose of the course—to develop a good basic idea and picture of what proper form is for the fundamentals.

When a warm April 1 dawns in Minneapolis, the "Winter golf" ceases and the three pros return to their respective courses to make everything ready for that big opening day.

What's the final effect when that opening day does come? They pack 'em in! Why?

By opening day the feel of a golf club in the hands is already fresh for both beginners and veterans, and the pre-season lessons easily preserve the strange springtime malady, "fairway fever," during the short interval before the courses are ready.

In short, many new "golf addicts" have been converted by indoor, "Winter golf," which entices the beginning golfer out on the real course as soon as he can tear himself away. And he's as eager as the next guy to go! Good lessons and individual help during the critical "breaking-in" period add large numbers of new golfers to tee reservation lists each year.

And what kind of golfers are they?

All of these newly-converted novices at least acquire a clear and accurate picture of proper golf form. They learn at least a few things about golf rules, techniques, playing according to rules and general golf "know-how" which they would have had to pick up more painfully and less sympathetically on the course, were it not for these free golf schools.

### Winter Lessons Build Confidence

These beginners escape much of the surprisingly serious and discouraging embarrassment usually considered one of the necessary tortures of starting in a sport such as golf. They're not forced to learn in a "sink or swim" effort among expert golfers on the fairways who may not be so tolerant of breaches of golf etiquette by unschooled beginners. Winter lessons tend to make beginners more relaxed and confident with the background and fundamentals they've picked up.

Many golfers who have carried through with the idea of the program and devel-

oped their skill and shoot below average scores, say that they might not have even started were it not for the easy "breaking-in" period afforded by the program. They're starting with people in the same state of golf-ignorance as themselves. The knowledge that "we're all beginners" and that mistakes are common here helps greatly to break down fears of social disapproval.

As a result, a much larger number of new golfers are added each year from high school and community center free lesson schools than would be added without the program.

#### Everyone Benefits

Benefiting greatly from these larger crops of new golfers each year are the men's and women's golf clubs organized at the public courses each season. They get a sizeable increase in membership strength annually. With this pre-season feeder program, an almost unique system of clubs for women, not only men golfers, has grown strong and active at the five courses. Ten women's clubs with a combined membership of over 600 were active in 1950.

As for the high school golfers, they benefit especially too. Because of their very recent golf lessons as seniors in school, the training and interest is still fresh and often fertile in producing many more golfing converts. Seniors leave high school and may start taking an active



Age isn't the requirement, it's the interest shown. Two generations learn golf as father and son at Columbia Manor's weekly classes. (L to R) Larry Ogala, 13, checks his grip with pro Fred Herrmann while father George looks on.

interest in playing immediately. Their golf habits already lean in the right direction and the high schools benefit from the increase in skill among boys and girls who compete in inter-school golf meets.

The grand result is that the golf facilities of Minneapolis—especially the five public courses of Theodore Wirth, Meadowbrook, Lake Hiawatha, Francis Gross

and Columbia—all are used more and in turn enjoyed more by the citizens of the community.

Golf is one of the fastest-growing sports in the country today. "Winter golfing" and pre-season promotion for the summer as operated in Minneapolis prove that you don't have to let Old Man Weather stop your golf season in the fall.

Bring your clubs and your golfers inside out of the rain, cold and snow. Golf indoors where the weather's always fine—it pays off!

#### "What's New" Theme of Westchester (N.Y.) Meet

"What's New for '52 in Turf" will be the theme of the Southeastern New York Turf School and Equipment Field Day to be held in Westchester County, New York, on Sept. 15 and 16.

New insecticides and fungicides, the place of the new soil conditioners in turf work, the latest information on weed control, and the results of this summer's work at the experiment stations will be presented by leaders in these fields at the first day's meeting. These sessions will be held from 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. on Monday, Sept. 15, at the County Center in White Plains.

A number of educational displays of turf grasses, weeds, insects and diseases will also be on display during the day. Monday's program will be sponsored by the Westchester County Extension Service with the Educational Committee of the New York-Connecticut Turf Improvement Assn. cooperating.

On Tuesday, Sept. 16, the New York-Conn. Turf Improvement Assn. will hold its annual Turf Equipment Field Day at the Willows CC in nearby Harrison, N.Y.

The morning session will begin at 10 A.M. with an examination of turf plots demonstrating the latest developments in weed and clover control. The remainder of the morning and all of the afternoon program will feature the latest in turf maintenance equipment in action. This will be followed in the evening by a dinner in the club's dining room and a "Stump the Experts" panel discussion by several of the local equipment dealers. Rain date for the Field Day will be Wednesday, Sept. 17.

If you have any surplus of trade-in clubs you'll find a market in the rural areas where small new clubs are started. Few such clubs have pros, and the players don't want to spend much for clubs, so when they get clubs reconditioned by pros who are known around the territory the newcomers to the game jump at the opportunity to buy.

— George Aulbach