

Roy Byrd, Home Club Pro, Is Big Builder of Golf

By ED SATTERFIELD
Golf Editor, Muncie (Ind.) Star

HIS name is not included in the archives of golfdom's greats nor has it ever been a by-word in the nation's clubhouses, but he has won the esteem of over a 100,000 residents of Muncie and Eastern Indiana because of his competence and devotion to the game.

That is the story of Roy Byrd, for the past 30 years pro at Minnetrista Municipal Golf Course, located near the downtown business section of Muncie.

This is probably the last summer that the boys are going to be able to knock the little white ball around Minnetrista. Purchased by the Muncie city schools, the nine-hole, 3,150 yd. layout is to be converted into playground and recreation areas for a proposed new senior high school.

Byrd and Minnetrista grew up together. The golf course was opened in 1922 under the auspices of the old Dynamo Club, predecessor to the Muncie Jaycees. The ground was loaned to the club—free of charge—by the Ball family, pioneer fruit jar manufacturers.

A native of Muncie, Byrd cut his golf eye teeth in 1910 as a caddie at the Delaware CC, which is still in existence. This exclusive layout is situated about three miles east of Muncie. In 1920 and 1921, Byrd served as assistant pro there under Jack Blakeslee.

In 1923 and 1924, Byrd was the pro at the Connersville, Ind., CC. It was during the 1924 season that he also agreed to serve as pro at Minnetrista, thus holding down two jobs.

"That was a nightmare," Byrd laughed. "After the 1924 season I resigned at Connersville and took the Minnetrista job on a full-time basis."

In length of service at one club Byrd is one of Indiana's Old Faithfuls. A check of the records reveals that only Johnny Sonnenberg of Fort Wayne's Foster Park course approaches him. Sonnenberg has been at Foster Park for 28 years.

Back in 1922 the Muncie Dynamo Club, predecessor to the Junior Chamber of

Commerce, conceived the idea of a municipal course. The matter of financing was through the sale of memberships, with \$5,000 being obtained in this manner. Roy M. Thomas, local industrialist, chipped in with another \$5,000. The Ball family, pioneer glass jar manufacturers, contributed the land.

Preliminary plans made in 1922 did not bear fruition until 1924, when Minnetrista was opened for public play. Byrd came to Muncie in 1923 to supervise the program.

Originally, Minnetrista consisted of only 40 acres, with 2,450 yards of playing area. Through the untiring efforts of Byrd, the course received a face lifting in 1928. At that time, work was started on redesigning a new 9-hole layout for a 3,150 yd. course on 53 acres.

In the meantime, the Dynamo Club had appointed a committee to look after the golf promotion and the sale of memberships was continued. Officers of the golf club were selected from the membership.

In 1928, after the Dynamo Club had been disbanded and the parent Chamber of Commerce had taken over operation of the course, the latter organization asked to be relieved of the responsibility of supervising the Minnetrista course. The Muncie YMCA agreed to take over the project, with the Ball brothers deeding the property to the "Y." In February, 1952, the property was purchased by the Muncie city schools.

The change in supervising management did not affect Byrd's status. However, the veteran pro, who was required to submit operating and expenditure reports, with recommendations, to the "Y" board of directors, asked that group to give him a long-term contract instead of a one-year arrangement, which had been its policy.

"Because of the problems involved in long-range planning, I felt that one-year contracts were inadequate," he said.

Evidently the board of directors felt the same way about it because at its next



Muncie, Indiana's popular pro, Roy Byrd

official meeting, a five-year contract was granted. This was in 1936 and the policy has been continued until the present time.

About three years ago, Byrd received a three-year contract with a two-year option. When the city took over the operation the following year, Byrd's contract was continued.

Byrd Builds Golf

Byrd has not been one to let glue stick to his feet in the years he has been operating at Minnetrista. He originated the Eastern Indiana Amateur in 1931 and the Eastern Indiana Open in 1932. In 1936, the Minnetrista pro organized the first Muncie city tournament. This meet has since been transferred to Delaware CC.

The Amateur and Open tournaments were held at Minnetrista three straight years. When Byrd was forced to temporarily take things easy because of illness, these meets were transferred to neighboring cities.

Today, Minnetrista caters to family groups and those who like to play merely for recreation. At present three industrial leagues operate during the summer.

Byrd points with pride to the fact that the first ABCD golf tourney ever held was played at Minnetrista. The principal reason this type of play was introduced was because the membership disliked the handicap system and wanted to experiment with something else.

Minnetrista also lays claim to having originated the first ABCD best ball flag tourney for holiday play. This meet is becoming so popular that members have requested that Byrd schedule it on Sundays as well as holidays.

Here is the way this type of tourney operates: best ball foursomes compete. Each has a flag with an allotted number of strokes written on it, which is par for the course. At the completion of the last par stroke, the flag is planted. The feature of the tourney is that it is a partnership affair and not individual.

"Basic Training" Advocate

A stickler so far as fundamentals are concerned, Byrd contends that one should be required to go through a period of "basic training" and apprenticeship before he could be classified as a pro or manager. He holds to the idea that a pro or manager is a technician and "there ought to be a differentiation between a player and a technician."

Continuing, he said: "It should be definitely understood from a playing standpoint that a player is not qualified as an instructing technician any more than a musician playing an instrument by ear is qualified to give fundamental music instructions.

"Why is he a golf pro when he does not have clinical training? If he is a golf technician, he should be able to explain the basic fundamentals of his profession.

"For instance, why do golf pros refer consistently to a hook or slice, referring to them as one fault, when they are two separate things? I contend that there is more than one type of slice. The same slice or fade that the National Open champion hits is not the same as afflicts Mr. Average Golfer or Mr. Chronic Slicer.

"Therefore, the same medicine or remedies for the above are out of order. The pattern should be to recommend corrections for different kinds of slices."

The Minnetrista pro said that he was advised years ago to specialize in some particular department of golf. Therefore, he has specialized in instruction. During an 8 year period, Byrd taught golf 12 months out of the year. He not only supervised the Minnetrista layout during the summer months but maintained an indoor golf school throughout the winter.

If a student does not have full confidence in the instructor then it is a waste of time to continue a golf lesson, Byrd

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Aside from the belt extending from Washington and Philadelphia through Cincinnati, Louisville and St. Louis to Kansas City, crab grass is not a serious problem provided fairways are covered with the right kind of grass, namely fescue, blue grass or a combination of this with Colonial bent on unwatered northern courses, and bent grass on the watered ones. In the South, a well maintained bermuda grass turf will resist crab grass invasion.

In the transition belt mentioned above, crab grass is a vexing problem. Clovernook and Camargo in Cincinnati are examples of unwatered courses with good fairways. The turf contains some bent. There is some crab grass each summer but turf comes back after the crab grass dies in the fall.

Prevent Seed Formation

In most instances, crab grass control is a matter of prevention of seed formation and checking its growth along with the introduction or encouragement of a good grass. Jim Morrison at Hershey, Pa. accomplished this with a homemade vertical cutter to shear off the seed heads. Others have used combs on mowers, sections of wire fence, or steel mats before mowing to raise the seed heads, so fairway mowers can cut them off.

Some watered courses in the New York to Chicago belt have been plagued with crab grass on watered fairways because the turf was mostly close cut blue grass. They are solving the problem by spraying with sodium arsenite at light rates during June, July and August; followed by re-seeding in early September to introduce Colonial bent which makes a tight turf and will stand close cutting. The choice of sodium arsenite over potassium cyanate or phenyl mercury is a matter of cost per acre, besides the fact that sodium arsenite also checks poa annua.

HOME CLUB PRO

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stated. "The student must be convinced that the recommendations the instructor gives are the ones he is seeking for his specific case.

"It seems that everyone who knows how to knock a ball down a fairway seems to think that he is a magician. Some students receive recipes from all over and the instructor must convince them that

most of the stuff they pick up is wrong.

"There are unlimited numbers of prescriptions for a golf swing and they vary on almost every golf course. That is a ridiculous situation. There is no other subject in which there are so many procedures to follow.

"Why?

"Because the unqualified golf instructor is not a technician but a guesser.

"Every instructor anticipates resistance on the part of most students. When you get a student to admit that he was doing something wrong, you have the battle won."

In his pro shop, Byrd handles all of the nationally known golf clubs and equipment. He specializes on personally-fitted irons and woods.

The Muncie pro believes that a golfer's ability is enhanced if he can be personally fitted to golf clubs that are related to his type of swing. This includes a large number of individual specifications.

Many Indiana golfers have so much confidence in Byrd's ability to order golf clubs to their particular specifications that they drive hundreds of miles to give their personal orders. Byrd is rightfully proud of this.

Public-Press Relations Best

The Minnetrista pro's relations with the public and the sports writers in the Indiana area are of the very best. In commenting on the fact that a middle-aged man walked in to speak with him during a rush period, Byrd said:

"That man used to caddie around here when he was a boy. He is a success in the business field now but he never forgot where he learned how to play golf. Whenever he is in town he never fails to come out here and pass the time of day with me."

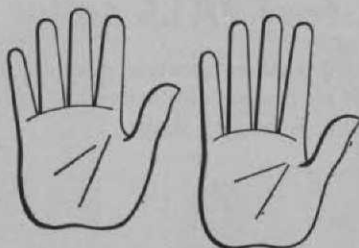
Although he is proud of his achievements in giving Muncie a good municipal operation, Byrd would rather talk about the progress of his two sons, Don and Gordon.

Don, who competed in the recent National Open at Oakmont, is assistant pro at the Randolph GC, Tuscon, Ariz. He is presently the Arizona open champion. Don won the American Legion National Tourney in 1948; won the Indiana state legion title in 1947 and 1948 and for three years was a member of the Arizona University golf squad. He was captain during his senior year.

Gordon was runnerup in the Indiana Junior Tourney at the age of 14. At 15

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he served as president of the Indiana Junior Golf Assn. and won the Muncie city golf title. At the present time, Gordon lives in Indianapolis where he is assistant office manager of the Banquet Dairy and Ice Cream Company. In addition, he is pro at the Western Electric golf range. The latter course was built by the company according to Gordon's ideas.

TURF DEVELOPMENT

(Continued from page 32)

for sprigging and there shall be no pockets where water can stand.

In the final light tillage operation, after grading and smoothing, 100 lbs. of nitrogen per acre or 1000 lbs. of a grade 10-5-5 organic base fertilizer per acre shall be incorporated into the top 2 ins. of the fairway areas.

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