

Eglin's Fine Course, Lesson Program, Please Airmen

A COMBINATION of a fine course and increased interest on the part of military personnel has resulted in a golf boom at Eglin Air Force Base, on the Gulf coast of northwest Florida.

Eighteen months ago players at Eglin's course averaged 500 a week, while now more than 1500 golfers tour the 6350-yard layout weekly.

The course is considered, on good authority, one of the finest. Its narrow fairways are lined with tall pines. There are huge traps along the fairways and guarding the greens, five water hazards and hilly terrain. One high estimate of the course comes from such a golfer as Walter Burkemo, PGA champion, who, after playing it

for ten days last year, remarked, "If a golfer can play this course he can play any in the country." Fred Hawkins called it "one of the greatest driving courses I've ever had the pleasure of playing."

Operational suitability testing of aircraft and equipment, the function of Eglin, headquarters of the Air Proving Ground Command, requires an isolated area. A problem created by this isolation is recreation and Eglin's golf facilities go a long way toward alleviating this problem. Military personnel enjoy a low fee, paying \$1.50 a month for a family membership.

Werring Has Class Programs

A factor contributing greatly to the increase in participation has been the golf



The 18th at Eglin Field's course is one of the layout's five water holes and a splendid finishing hole.



Eglin Field's golf clubhouse is a pleasant spot, kept neat and attractive by the army procedure of policing the grounds and k.p. It's especially popular with the large and active organization of women golfers.

clinics, conducted for periods of four weeks, six times a year. The clinics are free to officers and airmen as well as their dependents and Civil Service workers.

Much of the credit for the program's success can go to Lyle "Bud" Werring, who took over as Eglin's professional 18 months ago and instituted the classes. The fundamentals of the game are taught. Werring and his assistant, Joe Dodich of Waukegan, Ill., also give group instruction on the rules and golf etiquette.

Efforts to generate interest in golf have been assisted by the appearance of such well-known players as Patty Berg, Paul Hahn, Jimmy Nichols, "Porky" Oliver, Lawson Little, Anthony Cerda, Phil Green-

wald, Bob Toski, Ansel Snow and many others.

The 1953 World-Wide Air Force Tournament was held at Eglin in July. The late Lt. Morris Williams of Austin, Tex. emerged the winner, shooting rounds of 70-74-70-76 for a 290 total. Lt. Dow Finsterwald of Athens, Ohio was runner-up and M/Sgt. Harold Ridgley, the previous year's champion, placed third. Evidence of the fine way in which the tournament was held is seen in a decision by Headquarters, U. S. Air Force, again to have Eglin as the host for the 1954 event in October.

A permanent trophy in memory of Morris Williams has been established for the tournament. Williams was killed in September of last year at Eglin when his jet fighter crashed during gunnery practice.

Once a Boom Gem

Last month the second annual Eglin Open Invitation Golf Tournament was held. This is a one-day, 18-hole, medal play event, in which the professionals competing in the Baton Rouge Open were invited to stop off and participate on the way to meets in southern Florida. Other top professionals and amateurs in this section of the country were extended invitations. The winner was Bobby Martin, an amateur of the Pensacola (Fla.) CC with a 69, two strokes higher than the course record. The top pro was Mike Krak of Elinor Village, Fla., carding a 72, and next was a 74 by Broyles Plemmons of Valdosta, Ga.

The course has a varied history going back into the 1920's, when the area offered



The head of the Air Proving Ground Command, Maj. Gen. Patrick W. Timberlake, is second from the right looking at clubs shown by pro Bud Werring. Asst. pro Joe Dodich, at left, shows a WAF something of the latest in women's golf wear.



Eglin Field airmen and WAFs get group instruction from (L to R) asst. pro Joe Dodich, Eglin pro Bud Werring and Phil Greenwald, visiting pro from Hinsdale (Ill.) CC. Werring calls on instructing and playing pro stars who visit Eglin to aid in the class lessons.

little except fishing. Headed by James Plew, a group of Chicago golfing enthusiasts retained the architectural firm of Langford & Moreau to build an 18-hole course. It was named the Chicago GC. It later was known as the Valparaiso CC.

In 1937 the bombing and gunnery range that was to develop into Eglin AFB was established. The following year Plew died, after which the course was cut to 9 holes and allowed to run down. By Act of Congress in 1946 the land was purchased and added to the Eglin Reservation. The course was returned to an 18-hole layout and a renovation program begun. This was completed in 1952.

In maintaining the condition of the course at a peak for constant, heavy use, Werring depends on the aid of M/Sgt. William Newton, who with others on the base installations section, has done an excellent job of rebuilding the course and tending it with competent and keenly interested care. The course is especially known for the outstanding condition of its greens the year around.

Werring offers a standing invitation to golfers traveling through northwest Florida to stop off and try their skill on the Eglin course. Green fees are \$1.00 a day. Visiting pros on the winter tour have compared the condition of the course and the exacting shot-making required with Pebble Beach and the Augusta National. As

Phil Greenwald, Hinsdale (Ill.) CC pro, remarked, "Let me get back on an easy golf course. Sixty traps and we could put our clubhouse in the smallest one, and number seventeen even has a ladder!"

Kid Classes on Ladies' Day Double Attendance

"I found in years when I held the junior class on a day other than our Ladies' Day attendance of the youngsters would be very good at the start of the season and then as the season progressed would gradually dwindle to just a few children.

"In my inquiries, I found it was sometimes quite difficult for the mothers and fathers to bring the children to the junior class.

"Last year I changed the day of the junior golf class to Friday — which is our Ladies' day — and found that my class was not only twice as large as before but the attendance held up quite well during the entire summer, the reason being the mothers would bring the children and leave them in our care while they were playing golf."

—LOU BOLA, *Professional, Highland G&CC, Indianapolis, Ind.*

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