

Los Angeles Plans Big Public Golf Future*

By WM. JOHNSON

Supt., Los Angeles (Calif.) City Golf Courses

PUBLIC GOLF has a bright and assured future. The public golf courses will lead the advance. This is especially true of those that are governmentally owned and operated as distinguished from those that serve the public but are privately owned. Several factors enter into this consideration: first, governmental property is tax free, and second, land in flood-basins cannot be subdivided.

The cost of building a course and the taxes handicap construction of an adequate number of private golf courses in metropolitan areas. Far-sighted city fathers who have acquired property of sufficient acreage to permit construction of golf facilities will do well to get busy and provide the public with needed courses. No one connected with golf should ever feel apologetic for boosting construction of more golf courses. Public courses are self-supporting and the privately owned golf enterprises contribute substantially to public welfare.

The problem involved in providing golfing facilities includes not only the development of golf courses on low land but also the saving of existing privately owned courses from what appears to be inevitable subdivision. Some of these courses are strictly private and others, though privately owned, permit participation by payment of a greens fee.

One solution of the problem might well be the acquisition of courses whose subdivision is inevitable by city or county and continued operation of the properties for golf. The major problem here is securing sufficient funds at any one time for the capital investment. Acreage in a single course of 18 holes nearly always exceeds 100 acres, and the capital cost, therefore, in metropolitan territories is usually over half a million dollars per course.

Continued operation of improved public golf properties does not present a difficult problem because traditionally public golf has been supplied at a fee which is sufficient not only to pay for the cost of operation, but also to yield a surplus. Many cities

can attest to this experience. The surplus revenue has often been used to develop additional golf courses.

Golf Outside City Limits

The need for additional golf courses in all big cities is unquestioned. This need, however, must be appraised in relation to the whole metropolitan area rather than solely within the municipal boundaries. This is so because much of the open land suitable for golf development is found in unincorporated territory beyond the boundaries of cities. Courses in unincorporated areas may be used by city residents as conveniently as courses within the city. Travel to and from golf courses will more and more be via the freeway or parkway system, which is usually laid out in relation to the whole metropolitan area without regard to municipal boundaries.

Those responsible for planning and directing public park and recreation programs are changing their ideas regarding recreation areas and are planning facilities for all people who can use play areas. Among the adult activities being stressed, golf is at the top of the list.

The number of golfers grows as the population has increased. High-schools and colleges have introduced golf as a student activity. Golfing by President Eisenhower and Vice-President Nixon has added to the popular appeal. Improved freeway transportation and greater leisure have increased the public demand for the opportunity to play golf. The facilities of local government are far too inadequate to meet this demand and privately owned courses also generally are inadequate for the need.

Within the Metropolitan area of Los Angeles, for example, from the boundary of Long Beach on the south, to the north and west boundary of the San Fernando Valley, there are 20 fewer golf courses, public and private, now than there were 25 years ago. The reason for this loss is that private courses have yielded to residential subdivision. When it became more profitable to subdivide acreage in an expanding residential real estate market, many private

(*1954 GCSA conference address)

golf courses were eliminated. Public courses were not developed sufficiently in number to compensate for this loss.

Short Courses Popular Nurseries

Meeting the need for more public courses may require some readjustment of traditional thinking as to what constitutes a suitable golf course. When a regulation 18 hole course cannot be provided, a full nine hole course should be used. When there is not enough ground for either the 18- or 9-hole course, the pitch-and-putt course of varying lengths, and perhaps the 6-hole course, should be provided. These short golf courses are proving very popular in cities which afford only a limited area. These courses cultivate future golfers who add their support to the demand for increasing numbers of public courses.

The City of Los Angeles, to use my own city as an example of the imminent need, has three 18-hole courses, four 9 hole courses, of which 3 are pitch-and-putt courses. That the demand for public golf facilities is far beyond the capacities of the present system is illustrated by the fact that approximately 13,000 persons have registered to become eligible to make reservations on municipal courses, especially for Saturday, Sunday, and holiday play. But the capacity of the entire system of golf courses is 3580 on any given week-end.

No doubt, more citizens, in the thousands, would register and play on week-

ends if facilities were sufficient. Many more would learn to play if courses were available. It has been conservatively estimated that the municipal system should include 20 more courses and that these should be augmented by public courses established and operated by the County of Los Angeles, whose present system includes five, and by some of the smaller municipalities.

LA's Building Plans

The City has under its jurisdiction lands which are suitable for development of five additional 18-hole courses and six modified 9-hole or 6-hole courses. The sites for four standard 18-hole courses are in the Sepulveda Dam Park, a 2000 acre area available to the city for park development by a 50 year license from the federal government.

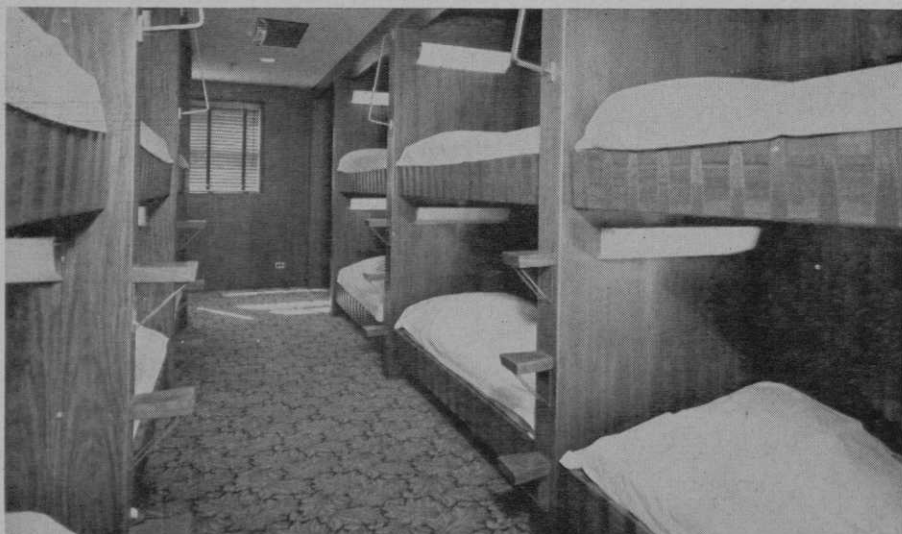
The site for an additional 18-hole course is in a similar area, Hansen Dam Park. This site is presently occupied by a temporary veterans' housing project. Sites for the shorter courses are Wilmington, Venice, and Arroyo-Seco Park. Two of the 18-hole courses are now under development in the Sepulveda Dam Park; one of which should be completed toward the end of 1954. In addition, there is a good prospect of acquiring another 200 acre site, formerly allotted to the public housing program recently abandoned, where an 18-hole course might be added.

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WHERE WESTERN OPEN WILL BE PLAYED JUNE 3-6

The 18th green of the Kenwood CC, where the 51st Western Open will be played June 3-6. The club was host to the National Amateur in 1933. Supt. Marion Mendenhall is grooming the course to perfection for the Western, and in the cheerful clubhouse Mgr. George Miller will present smooth tournament service. Bill Hook, club pro, rounds out the operating team to take care of Western contestants and gallery.



TAM O'SHANTER MEMBERS RELAX IN "QUIET ROOMS"

Tam O'Shanter CC (Chicago district) has what are believed to be the only "quiet rooms" at a country club. There are 12 bunks in the men's quiet room and 7 bunks in the women's section. The men's room is paneled in walnut, and the women's in bird's-eye maple. Construction and furnishing of the men's room was \$12,000; that of the women's "quiet" room was \$7000. Heating is by electrical radiant equipment. The rooms are air conditioned. Air conditioning units are recessed to save floor space. Automatic sprinklers provide fire protection. Lighting is indirect. Each bunk is equipped with an individual headlamp for reading and light is directed so light or reflection will not disturb room occupants who desire to sleep. Each bunk is supplied with steps and handles for safe and easy use. All mattresses and pillows are of foam rubber, germicide-treated to protect against possibility of infection from colds. The bunks are equipped with pillows and sheets but, if desired, wool blankets may be obtained from attendants available at all times. Built-in Teletronic clocks are in each room. Both rooms are attractively carpeted. No talking, smoking or drinking is permitted in either room. The "quiet" rooms are entirely for rest and have proved highly popular and valuable to members who want to relax before or after their golf.

It is noteworthy that the excess of revenue in the operation of golf courses by the Los Angeles City Department of Recreation and Parks has been sufficient to permit expansion in the number of municipal golf courses from one to eight without a drain on tax funds. To accelerate the rate of new construction, city fathers are beginning to favor appropriation of tax funds or public funds from other sources.

Los Angeles County, which first got into the golf business in 1937 with a WPA built golf course — the Santa Anita Golf course — now is operating, under several types of operation, five golf courses and has one under construction.

LA County "Save Courses" Plan

Following the opening of Santa Anita course, the county operated the single golf course through World War II. Immediately after the war, private capital built Alon-

dra course, an 18-hole affair with an additional 18-hole short course, on county land under lease. Then Altadena, 9-hole course, was built and opened to the public. This was the county golf picture until this year when the shortage of golf courses and loss of golf facilities stirred the County Board of Supervisors into action.

During the last few years, there has developed a "danger zone" in golf courses. All privately operated public courses within a 14 to 17 mile circle from the Los Angeles City Hall lay in this "danger zone" and were one by one being subdivided.

Something had to be done to save these open spaces so the Board of Supervisors appointed a Recreational Advisory Committee. Each supervisor named two outstanding public spirited citizens and to this

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LOS ANGELES PLANS

(Continued from page 64)

was added key county officials. This golf course group was named and dedicated to a campaign to "Save Our Golf Courses".

This action resulted in the county leasing the Lakewood CC course for 25 years from a subdivision company which already had its street graders and tractors within a brassie shot from the fairways. The county is now operating it.

The County then moved in and with Retirement Funds purchased Western Avenue Golf Course under terms of a lease purchase plan. The County will operate the course.

The Recreational Advisory Committee stands ready to move in an attempt to save other courses in danger, as are all golf courses in the "danger zone".

Program Is Publicly Oked

The political aspect of this campaign has good public and press backing. Newspapers and golf organizations are backing it and public sentiment is solidly supporting the program.

The group also urges the construction of short courses and driving ranges on small parcels of land which are available. Large 100-acre parcels of land are non-existent in the "danger zone".

The County has plans for additional golf facilities in and around flood control projects which are now rapidly being built by the Federal Government. These lands, at present, seem to be the only lands upon which golf courses can safely be built in the face of the rapid subdivision of all available property, including orange groves, walnut groves, and former agricultural land.

If the present trend continues, within a short space of time all Southern California golf courses may either be private country clubs or municipally owned and operated. The reason is high taxation. The county and the city may have found the answer to saving golf courses in the "danger zone" by taking them over.

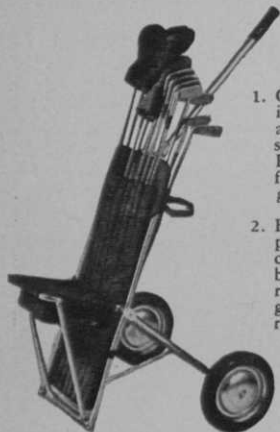
There is the possibility that private parties may accept leases on publicly owned lands for development of public golf courses whose terms would provide that the courses must be opened to the general public for play at fees not greater than those charged for play on established public courses.

These leases might be for terms of 20 years or more; probably a minimum of 20 years would be required in order to return the investment for development.

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The newly elected municipal administration, headed by Mayor Norris Poulson, is minded to plan constructively for the growth and future of the city. Schedules of needed public improvements are being submitted by the various departments. The Dept. of Recreation and Parks plans to include several golf courses on its schedule.

Sound Municipal Planning

Planning for improvements, even though funds are not immediately available or foreseeable, is a good municipal practice. During the depression years, the cities that had plans were those which benefitted from appropriations made to bolster the national economy.

The federal government is presently alert to the importance of preparing a public works program to be used in the event of economic emergency. Cities would wisely do the same. Los Angeles has already done so. Robert Moses, Commissioner of Parks in New York, is always ready with plans. That is one reason why so much benefit has come to New York throughout his administration in the improvement of park facilities of many kinds.

In the United States in 1953, 52 golf courses were completed. Twelve were municipal, 13 were pay-as-you play, and 18 were private courses. In addition, there were 109 courses under construction and 226 planned and prospective courses.

Impressive as this record may appear, it is believed that the future will witness an even greater growth. Public golf has, indeed, a bright and assured future.

PERSONNEL CHANGES ANNOUNCED BY DUNLOP SPORTS DIVISION

Vincent Richards, vp, Dunlop Tire & Rubber Corp., 500 Fifth Ave., New York City, announces following personnel changes in the Dunlop Sports Division:

Paul Gibbs has been made asst. to the vp of the Sports Division and Eastern Regional Mgr. Gibbs came with Dunlop in 1935 as sport goods representative in the Richmond Div., was later transferred to the Atlanta Div. and in 1939, became Sports Representative for Dunlop in the New York Div. A native of South Carolina, Gibbs attended North Carolina and Duke Universities. He is also well-known as an amateur photographer, having been President of the Metropolitan Camera Club Council for several terms and a director of the Photographic Society of America.

Frank Reeser has been appointed Midwest Mgr. of Dunlop Sports Division with headquarters in Chicago. Reeser was formerly sport goods representative in Buffalo Div. and later promoted to division