

Encanto Short Nine Eases Phoenix Golf Congestion

For years Phoenix, Ariz., and its surrounding communities have suffered from a lack of municipal golf course facilities. Three years ago the area's 300,000 people had only the 18-hole Encanto Park course on which to play. Private and semi-private country club courses relieved only part of the burden on the Encanto layout.

Faced with a shortage of available land and funds for another 18-hole layout, the City of Phoenix compromised by opening the Encanto short nine, built in 1952 on a 26-acre tract adjoining the Encanto 18.

The new course is not the pitch-and-putt type, common in many other cities, but a 1,720-yard course with six par three holes measuring 95, 150, 140, 156, 180 and 175 yds. and three par four holes. The three longer holes are 267, 255, and 312 yds.

In its two years of operation, the short nine has proved a huge success, both financially and as a means of relieving congestion on the 18-hole course. It has been especially popular with thousands of senior golfers who flock to the Phoenix area as tourists during the months from October to May. Men and women over 50 find the short nine ideal because they can play it without tiring.

Youngsters and beginners find in it a course they can play without encountering an excessive number of discouraging hazards. For all golfers, young and old, who formerly were hesitant to play for fear of holding up other golfers on the crowded 18-hole course, it has provided a place to play.

"The course was planned for these people," explains Pro Jack Morrison. "There are virtually no hazards, the course is flat and easy, and almost anyone can play it in less than 40 strokes."

Green fees were set at 50 cents per round to encourage play. In its first year, more than 60,000 rounds were played, and during the year ending July 1, 1954, the figure passed the 70,000 mark.

The big play, coupled with the low cost of maintenance, has made the course a more profitable operation than the 18-hole layout. Morrison has only two full-time men on the maintenance crew, as compared with 12 for the longer course. Yearly maintenance has cost less than \$14,000, leaving a gross annual profit of about \$16,000.

One gratifying feature of the short nine is the way its greens have held up. De-



Encanto short course pro Jack Morrison and a short golfer.

spite the fact that tee shots can hit the green on almost every hole, and the traffic on the greens is terrific, not a single short nine green has been lost, even during the critical summer months.

Morrison explains that fact by pointing out that all nine greens were prepared specifically for seaside bent grass when they were built. On the 18-hole course, in contrast, the greens were built 20 years ago for bermuda and sufficient drainage for bent was not provided. As a result, the long course has had greens grief since changing to bent two years ago.

Cedric Austin, director of the Phoenix parks and playgrounds department, and a number of Phoenix golfing enthusiasts including Encanto pro Milt Coggins, helped work out the specifications for the short nine three years ago. Total cost of the project was just over \$50,000, including \$34,400 for construction, \$4,000 for architect's fees, \$11,700 for maintenance and other equipment, and \$750 for supplies.

The short nine has not solved the Phoenix golf facilities shortage. Approximately the same number of golfers play the 18-hole course as before, and there still is a formidable waiting list for tee times in the peak winter months. But the short nine has helped the situation by providing a place for the old, the young, and the less experienced golfer to play. And it is long enough to prove interesting for anyone.

Phoenix parks officials feel their compromise solution to the facilities shortage might be adopted with profit by other cities facing the same problems, although the short course never will substitute for full-sized course facilities.