



An indication as to how well golf can add to the overall recreation facilities in a city park, is this picture of the 7th at Southgate (Calif.). The tee is to the left 135 yards, so that on one side of the fence the golfer shoots to the green and on the other side of the fence the third baseman pegs one home.

## Small Acreage, Time Element Make Short Courses Popular

By VERNE WICKHAM

**I**F there is any "new look" in this age-old game of golf it is the present upsurge in the construction of the Short Course.

There is nothing really new in the short, or three-par courses. They have been with us for more than a generation and many date back to the very early days of golf in both this country and abroad, for as pitch-and-putt courses they have existed for a long long time.

The pitch-and-putt course got its first start, according to many golf people, on hotel property. Some progressive hotel and inn keepers, anxious to add golf to their brochures, selected a part of the hotel grounds, took the iron shot from the regulation game, and added golf to their advertising.

Golf course operators and country clubs built them as a place to keep the regular customer around the old homestead, either while he was waiting for a game on the regulation course, or after his regular game, as a place where he could settle his bets or play Coke-Coke-Coke until dark. They also had their place in the teaching program and were used by the professional as a place for the fledgling golfer to try his shots before at-

tempting a full round of golf.

However, in post-war golf course development limited available acreage in large metropolitan areas has started a new upsurge in the construction of the Short Course.

Using acreage from 7-acres up, many of the Short Courses have been built and opened for play. Some of the early operators built them with tongue-in-cheek, not too sure what public acceptance would be. Many were frankly dubious if the Short Course would pay, and some were built as a sort of landscaping scheme or for advertising purposes.

In most cases the public reaction surprised and pleased the operators. They found the public playing them in increasing numbers. In many cases where the profit and loss statements were made, the operators found that acre-for-acre they were making as much money on their Short Course as they were realizing on the regulation size courses.

### Time Element Important

Then the time element proved important. We are a busy people and on crowded 18-hole layouts the length of time consumed in an 18-hole round

stretched out and out and out. On some public courses the time to play an 18-hole round stretched out into an uncomfortable five hours. This took golf out of the picture as far as a man with a limited amount of time was concerned. So, he hunted up a Short Course and with an hour to spend could play golf. They fast became popular lunch-time and before and after work rendezvous for many golfers and business boomed.

Some skeptics held that the Short Course boom was another Tom Thumb craze and would soon pass out of the picture. Such, however, has not been the case and private operators are investing amounts up to \$250,000 in the Short Course, complete with driving range and snack bars.

Some have been built on such limited acreage that the parking lots are larger than the golf course—and both are crowded. All over the country they have popped up and soon have become crowded. Heaviest emphasis in the so-called trend has naturally been the resort areas of Florida and California, where year around golf play keeps the cash registers ringing.

Recreation and park officials moved into the picture and in every case where a Short Course has been built its popularity has exceeded the fondest dreams of the officials. Many of these municipal facilities have been constructed adjacent to existing facilities and experts pointed to the fact that their success was due to the nearness of a golf course. The golfer,

they said, was attracted by the 18-hole course and just stuck around to enjoy the Short Course. Or, he was unable to get on the big course and took the Short Course as second choice.

Then private operators, and some municipalities, started building them in areas far removed from larger 18 and 36-hole layouts. These proved just as popular, and in some cases more so, than the ones located near established golf courses.

#### Who Plays Short Course

Naturally, the question arises—where are these golfers coming from? Who are they?

Are they graduates from the driving ranges? Are they beginners or seasoned golfers? Are they older men and women, unable to play the full eighteen? Are they physically handicapped with health reasons for playing shorter courses? Quite natural questions—but what were the answers?

In South Gate, California, a community of more than 52,000 people in the sprawling Los Angeles metropolitan area, Burt Anderson, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation, had a seven-acre grassed area in one corner of his 100-acre park that was getting very little use. It was an odd-shaped piece of land, stuck off in one corner and being saved for development at some future date on some future plan.

Anderson and a golf-minded Recreation Commission decided that golf was the best use for the seven-acre plot. The area was already under turf and water system in-



Starter house (20x30 ft.) at Southgate, Calif. course is also used by three recreation workers as their headquarters. Starter house is also snack bar. More than 60 clubs and about 12 dozen golf balls are stocked for rental purposes. One of the three practice putting greens is in the foreground. Southgate has three putting greens. Cups and flags are removed to indicate the green out of play.

# MONTHLY REVENUE FIGURES FOR SOUTH GATE, CALIF. SHORT COURSE

Month	Rounds	Green Fee Revenue	Concession	Total
July 1954	4480	\$2240	\$387.93	\$2627.93
August	4526	\$2263	\$418.00	\$2681.00
September	3654	\$1827	\$291.24	\$2118.24
October	2823	\$1412	\$229.30	\$1641.80
November	2478	\$1239	\$206.83	\$1445.83
December	2478	\$1239	\$315.40	\$1554.40
Jan. 1955	2876	\$1438	\$ 94.05	\$1532.05
February	3083	\$1542	\$201.70	\$1743.70
March	3663	\$1832	\$270.35	\$2102.35
April	3652	\$1821	\$359.55	\$2180.55

This represents 10 months operation. Course opened June 20, 1954 and in first 10 days operation played 1554 players. No financial figure included since it was in previous year.

Concession represents ball and club rental, plus small percentage of soft drink sales, operated by concessionaire.

Inventory of 60 golf clubs carried. Rented at 15c per club. Ball rented for 50c with 45c returnable upon return of ball, or sold for 50c. Inventory of around 12 dozen balls carried.

stalled. There was little to do but build some greens and traps, change the water system a little and so with a budget of slightly less than \$20,000 course construction started in March under the direction of Bill Johnson, planning consultant and advisor.

By June the course was ready and opened. The first month of operation justified Anderson and the Recreation Commission in their thinking — and it astounded some people! The total play for the first month totaled 4600 rounds of golf and poured \$2792 into the city coffers. That first month's play also brought into sharp focus the question—where are the golfers coming from?

Soon after opening Anderson set about to find the answers to the many questions. Spot checks were made over a period of weeks and hundreds of golfers interviewed. The spot check sheets carried 40 lines and after several days the sheets began to show the same general pattern and by the time several hundred golfers were interviewed, Burt was able to draw some conclusions. He had the answer to some questions.

Taking one-day's sample spot check it was found that there is no noticeable age group using the Short Course. Neither junior or senior golfers were in sufficient numbers to indicate a definite age trend. On the sample check-sheet there was one girl of 15 and a man of 61. The average age of the 40 players was 38, which would probably be classed as middle age and a duplicate of what one would find on a similar spot check made on the regulation courses. So, no particular age-group is using the Short Course.

As to male or female, the sample sheet indicated 28 men and 12 women—again about normal for an 18-hole course.

## Half of Players Beginners

The next question—and the vital one to recreation officials—was where did the individual start his golf career? This surprised many and is a concrete indication of how important these Short Courses are in the over-all golf picture.

Twenty-one of the 40 started playing golf on the South Gate course. Five started on a nearby golf range. So, twenty-six out of the 40 were brand new golfers!

Hence, it appears obvious that these Short Courses are and will be spawning grounds for the regulation courses. In this connection, the spot check attempted to determine how often the Short Course player went to the regulation course—if ever. Fifteen of the 40 had never played a full length golf course. But, they will.

Most of the players interviewed circled the South Gate course two to three times a week.

Some typical individual comments are interesting. One 37-year old golfer, who started playing golf in Michigan and had played since he was 12, played the South Gate Shore Course three times a week and only occasionally played a regulation course. He didn't have time, he said. Another 38-year old golfer who started playing in the Chicago area six years ago, plays the Short Course regularly three times a week and once a week plays a nearby regulation course. Another golfer of four years experience, plays twice a week on the South Gate course and once a week on the long course. These two keep their short game sharp that way.

The 61-year old man started two months ago, plays six times a week and has never yet attempted a full round on a regulation course. He probably will. The 15-year old girl has been playing the South Gate course regularly twice a week since it opened but has never played a regulation course. Will she? You answer that!

Then, take the case of the woman, 39, who started three months ago at the South Gate course, plays it twice a week, and has now played three times on a full eighteen. She is typical of the case history of most of the South Gate players. They start on the driving range or the Short Course and soon have played a full 18-hole course, but as indicated by many spot checks, still play the Short Course one to five times a week.

### Short Course Here to Stay

The "regulars" at South Gate are playing the course on the average of four days a week. Many, every day. During the California daylight-savings times heavy play continued until the golfers needed flashlights to finish. While most of them seem content to circle the 9 holes only once, many play 18 holes and many 27 or 36 holes. Regular foursomes are beginning to meet there on regular days

each week, just as has been the habit of golfers for 300 years.

The Short Course is not a fad or a

Their place in a city's recreation program is beginning to take shape. They provide golf to an over-all recreation program as sure and certain as does the 18-hole course. They have won their place in the golf picture and can be built and operated successfully—not only in areas which have only limited areas available, but are a good use of any given number of acres. They are additional golf facilities in connection with existing courses and they can be built and operated successfully in areas not adjacent to regulation courses.

They can be stuck away in the corner freak. It is fast becoming an integral part of the game and many people are certain it will be with us for a long, long time—at least, as long as golf is played anywhere and that should be long enough. of a regional park to supply needed revenue to ease the tax load for recreation. They can be used to beautify a problem piece of property—and will pay for the privilege. They can be stop-gaps in a long range golf program and can be opened to produce needed revenue, while an 18-hole course is being constructed, and remain as a sister attraction. There is really no end to the uses to which they can be put and no ceiling on their popularity, as proven by the South Gate spot-check.



The rules and regulations needed for the short-course must be simple, since many golfers start on short courses. However, here is a good place to start a golfer's education as to golf etiquette. Here are South Gate's rules. Player passes board on way to first tee.

### Turf Field Days and Conference Schedule

**RUTGERS . . . New Brunswick, N. J., Aug. 2**

**U OF FLORIDA . . . Gainesville, Fla., Aug. 9-11**

**RHODE ISLAND . . . Kingston, R. I., Aug. 10-11**

**TEXAS REGIONAL . . . San Antonio, Aug. 20**

**PENN STATE . . . State College, Pa., Sept. 7-8**

**OHIO . . . Wooster, Sept. 15**

**ALBERTA . . . Edmonton, Can., Sept. 23-24**

**NORTHWEST . . . Pullman, Wash., Sept. 27-28**

**UTAH . . . Utah Copper GC, Magna, Sept. 30-Oct. 1**

**ROCKY MOUNTAIN . . . Colorado A&M, Ft. Collins, Oct. 3-4.**