

Pro's Promotion Work Has New Course Busy

By **GEORGE KARGER**

SEPTEMBER 2, 1955 was a red letter day for Gainesville, Tex., as it marked the official opening of that city's new municipal course.

Located on the west side of the municipal airport property the course was designed by Ralph Plummer, noted Dallas golf course architect and is claimed to be one of the finest nine-hole courses in the Lone Star State. It represents an investment of \$38,853.89, not including the land nor the water well and tank facilities belonging to the airport.

Of this amount, \$15,000 was contributed through a fund-raising campaign among public-spirited local citizens. These included Gainesville golfers who were becoming weary of traveling 30 or more miles to play and also a large number of citizens who didn't play golf themselves but who

felt that a good course was essential to a well-rounded recreational program for a city of 13,000 population.

Of the latter group, however, a sizeable percentage have become active golfing enthusiasts through the tireless promotional efforts of Frank Stagner, pro-supt.

Selling the game to Gainesville citizens proved to be no simple matter. General interest was very low due to the longtime absence of a local course. How well Stagner met this challenge can best be illustrated by the number of green fees paid during the first seven months — 8494. Stagner believes that the reasonable fees — 75¢ for week-days and \$1 for Sundays and holidays — have played a large part in making golf available for the greatest possible number of people.

Six weeks before the course opened the Gainesville pro began giving free weekly group instruction to local women. Lasting



The area in which Gainesville, Tex., built its popular new 9-hole municipal course is typical of many situations in small communities. Buildings and landing strips of the municipal airport show in the upper right area of the aerial view.

A little stream with wooded borders wanders through the course in a way that smart golf architecture uses in providing excellent golf holes, attractive landscaping and easy maintenance.

until the official opening the lessons helped create a tremendous amount of feminine interest.

"Following my announcement," says Stagner, "about 60 turned out. This was approximately twice the number I had expected."

Of the 60, about 40 continued playing and have formed the Gainesville Women's Golf Assn., with Mrs. C. S. Etter as president. Stagner estimates that approximately 50 percent of the members have bought clubs and other equipment from his pro golf shop.

"Of the customers playing our course on weekdays," says Stagner, "I would say that about 40 percent are women."

Tuesday is Ladies' Day at the Gainesville course. A popular event being staged regularly is one in which each lady participating contributes 25¢ to a pot from which merchandise prizes from the pro shop are awarded to the winners. Stagner prefers to break this down into as many prizes as possible to insure maximum good will and favorable publicity.

Scotch foursomes are also popular but Stagner prefers to avoid traffic congestion on the course by staging such events on days when attendance is light.

Shortly after the official opening of the course an area championship for men was staged with some 46 participants. Jack Barnett of Gainesville was the winner.

Plans for this year include a city championship for men and women and a junior championship invitational tournament for boys and girls, ages 11 through 18.

Creates Teen-Age Interest

Aware of the value of teen-age interest, Stagner will give free group instruction this summer to anyone up to and including 18 years of age. Obtaining the cooperation of the school principals he has formed high school and junior high golf teams. Eleven high school and seven junior high boys turned out for the teams. Free instruction is given one day per week.

The Gainesville municipal golf course is characteristic of those laid out by Ralph Plummer — a tough, challenging course with plenty of distance. It has no sand traps. The three water hazards are located at each of the par 3 holes. Ladies' yardage is 6432, par 80; men's 6780, par 72.

To date no local golfer has broken par. A prize of half a dozen golf balls awaits the first to do so. A half dozen balls will also be presented to the first lady breaking 50 on nine holes.



Des Sullivan (right), Newark, N. J. Evening News, is congratulated by C. E. Krampf, pres., Dunes Golf & Beach Club, Myrtle Beach, S. C. upon being elected to head the Golf Writers Assn. of America for the coming year. Sullivan's election climaxed the Writers' annual powwow, held shortly before the Masters' tournament was played.

Two sets of markers are employed, red indicating the first nine holes and blue the second. The markers are alternated to insure uniform wear and traffic on the tees and to avoid one nine playing much shorter than the other.

The greens are large and well contoured, with an average putting surface of approximately 6500 sq. ft. each. The practice putting green measures 60 by 100 ft. The practice tee is 25 ft. deep, 300 ft. long and accomodates 25 persons.

The approximately 30 acres of fairway were first seeded in May, 1955. Prior to sowing the fairways were disced to a 7-inch depth, then harrowed and smoothed out with a drag constructed from three railroad ties. Fertilizing was done before the fairways were seeded with Bermuda.

Last October 1 seaside bent was sowed. The tees were sown with rye. On March 1 of this year the fairways were fertilized with three tons of 16-20-0.

A 5½ in. water line covers the entire course, with Buckner fairway sprinklers providing outlets 85 ft. apart from tee to green. The tees have from two to four outlets, depending upon size.

Maintenance equipment includes two putting green mowers, a three-gang fairway unit, a 60-inch Whirlwind mower, aerifier, two tractors, and a Magee scraper.

The attractive clubhouse and main-

tenance building was provided by remodeling an "L" shaped officers' mess hall built by the Army at the airport during World War II. Constructed at a cost of \$5000 the building consists of a men's locker room, ladies' locker room, lounge, club storage room, and a 24 by 30 ft. pro shop. The clubhouse's inside finish features stained and varnished fir paneling while the outside is covered with cedar shakes both for durability and attractive appearance.

Stagner is assisted in the operation of the pro shop by his wife, who manages the shop while her husband is giving lessons.

Stagner, a Class A member of the PGA, has 11 years' experience as a club pro. Prior to coming to Gainesville he was pro at the Bob-O-Links course, Dallas. He has also served as pro at the Barksdale Air Force Base golf club, as pro and manager of the Marshall, Tex., CC, and helped in the construction and served as pro at the Palmetto CC course, Benton, La.

Club Managers Protest High Taxes on Memberships

Protests of the inequities in club dues taxes have been made to the House Ways and Means Committee by the Club Managers Assn. of America in recent months.

The chief objection of the CMAA is to the continuance of the 20 per cent tax on membership dues. Richard E. Daley, vp of the organization, pointed out that in 1954 the House of Representatives voted to reduce the tax to 10 per cent, but when the Excise Tax Reduction Act, passed that year, was sent to the joint Senate — House committee for final drafting, the cut was not allowed. The CMAA, Daley added, had no quarrel with the lawmakers when the membership excise was increased to 20 per cent during World War II and continued through the Korean emergency, but it should have been reduced two years ago along with other taxes when the Excise Act was passed. Daley also stressed that the growing importance of clubs in community and civic life has done away with the notion that the club dues tax is a tax on a "luxury", and should not be construed as such when future tax revisions are made.

Dues taxes on life memberships also have been protested by CMAA. In many cases, the Assn. pointed out, taxes on such memberships must be paid by clubs themselves because of commitments made years ago when the clubs were soliciting investment capital to begin operations. The cur-

Johnson Gets Award



Willie Hunter (left) toastmaster at annual meeting of Southern California PGA, looks on as William (Bill) Johnson shows gold membership card presented by the PGA in recognition of Bill's outstanding service to golf. Johnson is superintendent of the Los Angeles city golf courses. Johnson, former pres. of the GCSA came to LA in 1931 and has supervised construction of several courses in and around the California metropolis.

rent tax may bear little or no relationship to the amount paid for the life membership when it was originally offered. In addition, if the life member is a non-resident, CMAA contends that he should pay only a dues tax required of a regular non-resident member. The Treasury Dept. has agreed that changes should be made in life membership tax laws.

CMAA also has filed protest against an arbitrary ruling of the Internal Revenue Dept. which classifies an honorary member as well as a 40-year member in the life membership category for tax purposes. The Managers Assn. contends that to tax such memberships as full, active resident annual memberships is unfair and inequitable.

Two nuisance taxes which have plagued clubs in recent years have come under attack. One is a "tax on locker fees" which brings charges for use of lockers for a period of more than six days within the definition of dues. Collection and administrative expenses of club managers in handling these taxes are said to be all out of proportion to the negligible amount realized from them. The same condition, said the CMAA, also applies to the 20 per cent assessment on golf club cleaning operations.