

Increasing Importance of Municipal Courses Cited at Park Meeting

Boston's plan for preserving breathing space around the metropolitan area exemplifies the kind of thinking park and recreation officials will have to indulge in if they are to provide top recreational facilities for their communities, Rex McMorris, executive vp of National Golf Foundation, told the 58th conference of the American Institute of Park Executives at their golf course planning session. The conference was held in Seattle's Olympic Hotel.

McMorris told how Boston city officials, cognizant of increasing population and shorter hours and added leisure time for their more than 800,000 inhabitants, have provided a 100 mile "green belt" around the periphery of the metropolitan area to take care of recreational needs. McMorris also pointed out that although municipal layouts account for only 15 per cent of all courses in the U. S., more golf is played on them than on semi-private and private courses combined.

"Since golf has so definitely been taken out of the category of being a rich man's game," he added, "we all are faced with the reality that it must be fully provided for in any community recreation development program." McMorris cited an imposing list of cities in which the game is adding revenue to municipal coffers and mentioned several other communities in which as many as two or three municipal courses have recently been built, will soon be opened for play or are being planned. On the other hand, the Foundation executive called attention to the 700 communities of 5,000 or more population without municipal golf facilities.

Must Overcome Difficulties

Burt Anderson, South Gate, Calif., park supt., told the Seattle audience of some of the difficulties that have to be overcome in obtaining land, appropriations and equipment for the starting of municipal courses, but added that the arguments against expanding golfing facilities are not by any means insurmountable.

Anderson said the one strong argument in favor of municipal layouts is that they are invariably self supporting. Then, after tracing the building of and history of South Gate's publicly owned Par 3, he told how his park department constantly sampled opinions of golfers who played the course and got some very definite ideas as to why short courses are necessary in

a city's recreation program. He listed them as follows:

1. Golfing facilities usually are inadequate, even in golf-conscious communities;
2. Factors such as time, transportation, age and health prevent some persons from playing the longer courses;
3. Many people have found a hobby for the first time in their lives.
4. It has brought the family to parks and playgrounds in a group rather than separately. Where pop, for example, once begged off going to picnics and outings, he now enthusiastically endorses them because he knows he can get in some golf at the Par 3 adjoining the park or recreation area.

Tram Is Popular

Pete Masterson, golf director, dept. of parks, Seattle, mentioned two innovations in course operation in his brief report on the Seattle courses. Most popular in the eyes of the golfer is a tram or power lift that eliminates a long uphill hike from 11th green to 12th tee of the Jackson Park course. Golfers gladly pay a dime for the trip to a private concessionaire who has a contract with the city for three years. At the end of this time the tram reverts to the city.

The second "labor saver," reported by Masterson, is a mechanical ticket dispenser installed on the short nine hole course in Jackson Park. The golfer obtains a ticket by inserting a half dollar. Tickets are checked on the course by a park employee. Masterson reported the dispenser has proven to be very satisfactory.

The remaining hour of the session was devoted to planning and building the course. Course architect William F. Bell served as moderator and was assisted by architects A. Vernon Macan and Norman H. Woods. Bell discussed contractual agreements covering such details as maps and plans, supervision, time limits, inspection, payment and feasibility of split contracts.

Macan told the officials, "a mere string of numbers (par) on the scorecard is no standard by which to judge a golf course. Rather it is the strength and character of the individual holes that are the determining factor."

He said the challenge to be met by the architect was to see that every hole demanded its rightful number of good golf shots. Many holes rated par 4 on the scoreboard are probably par $3\frac{1}{2}$ or less, and total par, be it 70 or 72, does not tell the true story.