

Golf Is Big Business In Los Angeles County

By **VERNE WICKHAM**

Los Angeles County backed into the golf business, when in the early '30s, it sponsored a WPA project to develop the 185 acres which became Arcadia County Park. It is located in Arcadia, hard by the San Gabriel mountains and 15 miles from LA's Civic Center. The park included a swimming pool, two bowling greens, several baseball diamonds, a large picnic area, and a golf course, now known as Santa Anita.

The dream of the planners was that golf course revenue would pay the freight for the rest of the recreational facilities. It certainly has worked out that way. From that one course, the Los Angeles County golf system has grown to three 18's and one 9-hole layout, doing a business of more than a half million dollars annually. Under the guidance of the park and recreation dept., the county has one new course under construction and is embarked on a program to build eight more within the next 10 years.

Campaign Saves Lakewood

The Santa Anita GC in Arcadia County Park was opened in 1939. The second course in the countywide system was the 9-hole Altadena course, carved out of what was left after subdividers cut down the Altadena GC, originally an 18-hole semi-private layout. Play at this 9-hole course started out at near capacity and last year put almost \$70,000 into the county coffers.

When the subdividers moved dangerously near Lakewood GC, located near Long Beach, the county prodded by a

citizens' committee, organized a "Save Our Golf Courses" campaign and started negotiations to acquire the course. The owners refused to sell but indicated a willingness to lease. Thereupon the county leased the course at an annual rental of more than \$100,000 with the owners getting the course back after 20 years. Now the county is negotiating to purchase the layout. The asking price is reported to be around \$1,900,000. Lakewood is the most productive course in the county system, returning a net operating profit in 1956 of \$118,282 due to a busy clubhouse business.

Next to be saved from the subdividers was the Western Avenue golf course in southwest Los Angeles. It was bought outright for \$1,700,000. The purchase was made by the County retirement fund, using huge reserves that were yielding only low interest rates. The course was leased back to the County parks and recreation dept. at \$60,000 annually. The County board of supervisors is now buying the course from the retirement fund over a five year period. Western Avenue made \$80,000 to apply to the purchase price last year and it is expected to pay for itself in about 16 years.

Yardage Information

Visitors playing Delray Beach (Fla.) CC frequently and favorably comment on small white posts bordering fairways marking 200 yards from center of tees and red posts in the rough marking 150 yards from the centers of the greens. Explanation of these posts is on the scorecard.

Los Angeles County Golf Picture

Report of County Golf Courses
Fiscal Year 1955-56

Revenue	Altadena 9-hole	Lakewood 18-hole	Santa Anita 18-hole	Western Ave. 18-hole
Green Fees	\$66,087	134,418	141,158	140,247
Concessions	\$ 3,900	59,655	13,036	18,930
Rentals	\$	850	480	1,836
Total Revenue	\$69,987	194,923	154,674	161,014
Operating Expenses				
Salaries & Wages	\$46,427	60,972	81,126	67,616
Maintenance exp.	\$ 4,659	9,927	10,267	9,504
Utilities	\$ 8,252	5,741	8,024	3,005
Total	\$59,338	76,640	99,418	80,126
Net Operating Profit	\$10,648	118,282	55,255	80,888