

Cozy Decor Lures Golfers to Join Indoor Club

Up in Augusta, Me., where the winters are long and bitter, a golfer has plenty of time to lose the touch between fall's first snow and the spring thaw.

An enterprising pro can fill in this void, which extends to some five months, by operating an indoor golf club — and that is just what Al Biondi, the headmaster at Augusta CC, has been doing.

When you think of indoor golf clubs or schools, you normally envision a rather dismal, high ceilinged room with a couple nets, floor mats, a rack of clubs and a somewhat battered desk littered with oddments of paper and ashtrays. But Al's place, which is operating until the middle of this month, doesn't have that beatnik



Al Biondi (above), who runs August (Me.) Indoor Golf Club, manages to get in a little trap practice himself. At right, he gives a lesson. (Below) The 9-hole miniature putting green has been a popular spot all winter.



look. It's real cozy. What's more, it carries an impressive name — Augusta Indoor Golf Club — and not just "Biondi's Winter Golf School," or something similar.

In Heart of City

The club is located right in the heart of the Augusta business district on a ground level floor. The first thing the player sees when he enters the club is a merchandise display which occupies a large area in the main room. Adjacent to this is a carpeted clubroom in which there are tables, a sofa and easy chairs, various kinds of vending machines, a coffee maker, refrigerator and hotdog steamer.

There's a cultural atmosphere here, too, with stereophonic music softening up the background and a well supplied magazine rack, containing a wide range of publication, and providing intellectual fare. Cards, chessmen, checkers and cribbage boards are made available to the patrons and so are two sun lamps. The latter are in keeping with Biondi's policy of not only "keeping your golf swing sharp through the winter but of supplying a Florida tan if you want it."

A door from this room leads to another where a ping pong table is set up in one corner, with the remainder of the room beings used for storage of members' clubs.

"The Pit" Is Popular

At this point, the golf room may seem almost incidental. But Biondi has one, and a very excellent one, at that. In addition to three regular nets, he has an enclosure for practicing trap shots. Players hit out of a pit that is 10-feet square with bona fide sand that is slightly more than a foot deep. Al reports that one-third of his lessons are given to persons intent on learning how to extricate themselves from traps. "The pit," as he calls it, has led to a spectacular sale of wedges this winter.

A short distance from the trap is a miniature, 9-hole putting green decked out in felt carpeting that approximates the real thing. It has proved to be just about as popular as the trap.

The Augusta Indoor Golf Club is not just a walk-in affair. There is a membership arrangement in which the season assessment is \$25 for men, \$17.50 for women and \$35 for man, wife and family. This entitles the member to use all the club facilities free of charge, although he must pay for his lessons at the rate of \$2.50 per half hour. Non-members are charged \$1.50 for daily use of the nets and clubrooms and \$3.50 for lessons.

Biondi opened his club Dec. 15th after



With the Junior Chamber of Commerce taking over the running of this year's Milwaukee Open, which will be played Aug. 25-28 at North Hills CC, the Miller Brewing Co., has given \$8,000 worth of tournament equipment to the new sponsor. Robert Kaminski (l), Norman R. Klug, Miller pres., and John Ryerson are shown inspecting the equipment which has been repainted and refurbished. Kaminski and Ryerson are on the tournament committee. Miller Brewing Co. formerly backed the event.

promoting it through newspaper ads and by holding an open house. More than 200 persons came in to look over the club the first day and within two days about 80 people took out memberships. Today Al has around 175 golfers who are regular members. He has followed up from time to time with newspaper displays that advertise both the club facilities and the golf merchandise that he has for sale. One upshot of his winter activity has been to sell more than a dozen sets of clubs that will be delivered when his members are able to get outside to play.

The Augusta winter club is open seven days a week—from 10 until 10 on weekdays and from 10 until 6 on Sundays. On numerous occasions, Biondi has given free clinics or shown golf films to stimulate interest. He also has been able to work in a good deal of group instruction. He has, for example, two groups of women who practice and take lessons each week with these sessions being broken up by a coffee and doughnut break. Group instruction for men usually is held in the evening or on weekends.

As for expenses involved in running a winter club, Biondi cites these in addition to his capital outlay for nets, tables, chairs, etc.: Rent, \$125 a month; Electricity, \$30 monthly; Telephone, \$15 a month; and cleaning of the clubrooms, \$75 a month.