



Champions GC

Burke and Demaret Have Carried Over Their Success on the Circuit to Launching and Operating A Club

By TOM DAVISON

The flowers that bloom in the spring-time are precisely on schedule at Champions GC where Jimmy Demaret and Jackie Burke, with the help of some bulldozers and over \$800,000, carved a wonderfully fine golf course from a forest of pine, sweet gum and oak trees.

The scent of spring's flowers is no sweeter to Demaret and Burke than the feeling that their investment is a good one. For the Champions, despite a relatively isolated location 20 miles from Houston, is literally teeming with golfers.

"We don't have a gin rummy player in

the bunch," laughs Burke of his 715 members. "All they want to do is play golf."

This despite the fact that the \$125,000 Champions Lodge has one of the most beautiful men's lockerrooms of any clubhouse in the nation.

The pro-mgrs. of the new club have set 750 as their membership goal for present facilities. The maximum should be reached very soon. When demand calls for a membership increase over 750, Burke and Demaret plan another 18-hole course on their ample 532 acres of heavily-timbered, well-watered sandy loam terrain.

Memberships sell for \$1,200, plus tax. Dues are \$30 monthly.

Good by Comparison

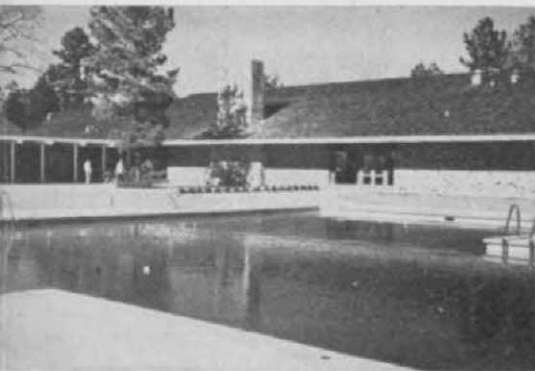
The \$800,000 spent on the Champions facilities is considered money well applied, since another club built in the Houston area about the same time cost over twice as much.

Burke says 100 per cent of his male members are golfers, and since the Champions Wo-

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Jack Burke, Jr., Jimmy Demaret and Don White, supt. (l to r) keep things going smoothly at The Champions.



Pool and pro shop are very much in keeping with the classy atmosphere at The Champions. In the oval is the first tee area where there is a traffic jam almost daily. Below are a couple holes that can curl your hair — The 153-yard No. 8 that presents a frightening approach and No. 4, a 222-yard par 3, that doesn't permit liberties with a hook.



men's Golf Association has over 300 active members, the course is usually crowded, even on week days.

"What's more," Burke adds, "I'll bet our club has as young a membership as any in the country. I'd say our average age is 40."

Burke also takes pride in the fact his clubhouse mgr., Mickey Attas, and Don White, his supt., are active golfers, and good ones. Both shoot in the 70's.

In Excellent Condition

Opened in Nov. 1958, the lush Champions layout must be one of the best-conditioned new golf courses in the world. Both the spacious fairways and the unusually large greens are grassed in Tifgreen 328, the turf that has proved itself the best for southeast Texas' humid climate.

Don White has kept the big, deeply-contoured greens consistently good, both in summer and winter. Tifgreen, as any Bermudagrass, becomes dormant during the winter season, and White keeps things green by supplementing Red Top every Oct. This lasts through April, when warm nights kill the bent and bring out the luxuriant Tifgreen again.

"Tifgreen gets a little brown, and its growing slows down during the winter," White explains, "but it never stops growing entirely and it comes back far quicker than regular Bermuda after a cold snap."

White has found that a quick washdown job on his greens after a winter frost keeps the grass from freezing out.

"We're up many a cold winter morning at 4:30 washing the frost off those greens," White says. The Champions layout is of course, open 12 months a year.

Cooperative Use of Equipment

White, who aerifies his golf course every May and Sept., uses a cooperative system with other supts. in the area.

"Since we have only one aerifying machine, we borrow three others twice a year, then let them use ours when they're ready. It works out real fine for all of us," White says.

Every time the Champions greens are verticut there are 18 pickup truckloads of valuable Tifgreen clippings available to the growing number of Houston area courses converting to the new grass.

Architect Ralph Plummer built the Champions course, after collaborating with Burke and Demaret on its design. The famed pros sought to incorporate the best features of courses they have played over the world in their own course. Champions has the wide fairways of Augusta National, the gentle pine-bordered roll of Pinehurst, some of the trouble a stray-

ing shot encounters at Pine Valley, even a hole that would challenge the famous oceanside 12th at Pebble Beach.

Built for Easy Maintenance

Despite its great size, the course is a model of efficiency for the maintenance man. The course area totals about 250 acres, with 100 of those acres in teeing, fairway and greens area. The greens average 11,000 sq. ft. The smallest is 8,500 and the largest a monstrous 19,000 sq. ft.

Great care was taken to build the course for easy maintenance, with a minimum of handwork required. One large mower cuts the entire fairway and rough area.

Forty-two sand bunkers were installed a year after the course was built following careful planning to assure that they would be properly placed. Even so, Burke figures they cost about \$100 a year each in maintenance, for every bunker requires some handcutting.

Burke and White agree that the use of rubber-spiked rakes, stationed at each bunker for players to use, eases the maintenance problems.

"We plan to add about 10 more traps soon, but we're going at it carefully, for that means another \$1,000 to our annual overhead," the moneywise Burke said. "So far, we haven't put a single trap in the wrong place," he added.

Glare Is Reduced

Demaret is chiefly responsible for a new kind of sand used in the traps at Champions. Wearied from the glare of white sand through the estimated 1,500 tournaments he's played in, Demaret decided to try some gray-white mortar sand, sifted through 18-gauge screen. The sand has proven very satisfactory and the off-white color greatly reduces glare while not detracting from the beauty of the course.

The teeing areas, stretching from 35 to 75 yards in length, are mostly unelevated, decreasing maintenance costs substantially.

Plummer, who has built 18 golf courses in the Houston area during the last 10 years, was 15 months on the job at Champions. After six months were spent clearing and outlining the fairways, White moved in for his first planting in July, 1958. Due to heavy rains the fairways had to be replanted three times within a three-month period.

Four-Acre Nursery

A four-acre Tifgreen nursery had already been established in the practice
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area. The grass was verticut and broadcast over the fairways, followed by wetting and topping. The fairways, heavily fertilized before and after planting, were ready for play within four months. White used 500 lbs. an acre before planting, another six applications at the rate of 200 lbs. an acre every 15 days after planting.

A single artesian well supplies the course's large storage lake and four smaller lakes. Two pumps, each with a 500-gpm capacity, feed the fairway watering system. White maintains a four-month's supply of water at all times.

Demaret and Burke spent almost two years inspecting sites before deciding on the one they chose. Two streams wind through the course and a large, deeply-embanked creek comes into view on two holes. The fourth green is located just beyond a 30-foot bank of the creek, requiring almost 200 yards of carry into the prevailing wind from the back tee. Erosion had been eating away at the green until White hit upon the idea of planting willows and wisteria vines in the bank, and piling logs, dirt and grass behind the willows. This appears to have solved the problem, at considerably less money than a retaining wall would have cost.

Five Years to Go

The pro-mgrs. say it will be at least five years before the course is the way they want it to be. Their program includes the planting of over 1,500 flowering shrubs at the rate of 500 a year—pyracantha, crepe myrtle, ligustrum, oleander, Japanese holly, mimosa, magnolia, azalea, dogwood and redbud. Five types of trees are predominant on the course—oak, pine, sweet gum, elm and hickory. Many of them are well over 50 years old.

Plummer, Demaret and Burke made full use of the ample acreage. No two holes are bunched anywhere on the entire course. There is at least a 50-yard width of wooded area between each fairway. The long teeing areas, wide fairways and large greens which afford a wide variety of pin placement, can make the course play quite easy at 6,100 yards, or very difficult at over 7,000 yards when the many hazards come more sharply into play. Par is 36-35-71 and the middle tee yardage is 6,613. The course's 11 par-four holes are all in the 400-yard range, varying from fairly easy to very hard. The

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three par-fives are easy and the four par-threes are all difficult.

Although originally intended strictly as a golf club with only basic clubhouse facilities, Champions has yielded to family demands enough to add a luxurious swimming pool and one of the most elaborate men's lockerrooms in the Southwest. And the clubhouse calendar is full with social activities.

"They have quite a drive to get here, so we want to make it worth their while when they come," clubhouse mgr., Attas, explains.

Faculty Member Tax Ruling Applies to Club Managers

An internal revenue dept. ruling (59-409, I.R.B. 1959-52, 16, 1954 Code Secs. 119 and 3402) which was made in the case of employees of another category, applies to club mgrs. and their assistants, according to a recent CMAA Newsletter. It states: Where resident faculty members of a boarding school are furnished meals and lodging for themselves and their families on the school premises for the convenience of the employer, and are required to accept lodging on such premises as a condition of employment, that portion of the

value of the meals and lodging furnished, which is allocable to themselves, is not includible in gross income. However, the value of meals and lodging furnished their wives and children constitutes additional compensation which is includible in the gross income of such faculty members. Therefore, it is subject to withholding tax.

The ruling goes on to state that the foregoing doesn't apply for any term or period during the school year when students are not in residence in the absence of showing that the faculty member's presence during such term or period is for the convenience of the employer.

Rutgers Field Day

The 1960 Rutgers Turfgrass field day is scheduled for Aug. 10 and 11. Lawn and high-cut turf studies will be shown on the 10th and close-cut turfgrass studies will be shown on the 11th. Tours will start at 10:30 a. m. and 1:30 p. m. on both days.

Ryder Cup Matches

East Lake CC in Atlanta will be the site of the 1963 Ryder Cup matches. The 1961 competition will be held at Royal Lytham and St. Anne's GC, St. Anne's-on-the-Sea, Eng.