

110-Hour Weeks Convert Brush Piles To A Golf Center



Ralph Bolander, owner and professional of the Shortholes GC in Vienna, O., is one of those fellows who wanted to own a course for just about as long as he can remember. But outside of playing an occasional round, he had to wait until 1949 before he became really familiar with the golf business. That year he leased the Netherwood course in Plainfield, N. J. and, serving as manager, pro and supt., crowded about 10 years of learning into one.

Leasing a place was fine, but what Ralph really was interested in was ownership of a course. So he returned to his old haunts in Ohio, bought a piece of land and started to do something about realizing his dream. The only trouble was that between that dream and a golf course more brush and timber intervened than Bolander thought existed in the entire state. With the aid of a fellow who owned a bulldozer, Ralph eventually got his land cleared.

It wasn't necessarily easy after that. Fourteen brush piles, each as large as a house, had to be burned. Thirteen of them went up in smoke and were reduced to ashes without incident, but Bolander just couldn't reduce the fourteenth. So, he had his bulldozer expert pile dirt over it and it became one of Shortholes' hazards. Six years later, though, Bolander had the hillock cut down and he salvaged 40 loads of fine topsoil from it.

Girl Tractor Driver

Equipment rented from a local implement dealer was used to grade Shortholes. Then the new owner invested \$200 in a sawed-off Mack truck that was put to work as all-purpose tractor. A teenage girl, who lived across the street from the course and was a kind of frustrated hot-rodder, became Bolander's tractor operator. Together, they sprayed Shortholes' acreage and applied lime and phosphate. The girl also helped out when Bolander installed light poles and a watering system and hauled in slag and humus for the greens.

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Ralph Bolander, Shortholes owner, and his wife are seen in these photos along with views of the Vienna, O. golf center.

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Brush Piles to Golf Center

(Continued from page 28)

"That girl really was a find," Ralph laughs in recalling her. "She could do things with that truck that Mr. Mack never intended."

Shortholes was opened on June 8, 1951. Actually, it wasn't quite ready but the new proprietor was forced to start getting a return on his investment. He had spent the winter before working in an automobile plant just to make ends meet and so, as Ralph points out, "the new enterprise wasn't dripping with surplus funds. The only surplus in evidence was debts."

What A Beginning!

From a publicity standpoint, Bolander couldn't possibly have contrived a more sensational debut for his Par 3 course than Virg Theis, a local amateur, arranged for him. Leading off the first foursome to play the course, Theis got a hole-in-one on No. 1, a 112-yd. hole. This feat not only was highlighted in newspapers in the vicinity of Vienna but was picked up by papers from coast to coast. A happening such as this certainly doesn't hurt a man's business.

Shortholes prospered thereafter, but

it wasn't an overnight financial bonanza for Bolander because he kept plowing money back into his holding in order to improve it. Twice he has revamped the course's lighting system and, over the years, the course itself has been constantly improved. In 1958, Ralph purchased adjoining land and put in a range. Soon after he built a large structure that houses long rows of bi-level tees.

Dawn to Midnight

Property, of course, makes a Par 3-range combination but the returns it brings still depend largely on the perseverance and ability of the people who own or manage it. Until about two years ago, Bolander had been practically a dawn to midnight operator for at least six months or eight a year since the day he started building Shortholes. During that time his wife, Janet, had devoted thousands of hours to running the pro shop, working at the starter's desk and keeping the financial records straight. Then, in 1959, Bolander hired Pete Kostyshak to take over as supt. at both the Par 3 and range and serve as general assistant. "I'm lucky that he applied for the job and I hired him," says Ralph. "Pete puts as much hard work and thought into this thing as he

would if it belonged to him.

The hiring of Kostyshak enabled Bolander to go on about an 80-hour work week, a reduction of about 30. Shortholes opens daily around 9 a. m. and it's usually the following 2 a. m. before the last player has departed and the course and range are closed. This goes on seven days a week for more than five months a year. "It's no picnic," says Bolander in describing the entire operation to prospective golf center proprietors who have come all the way from New York to Colorado to find out what it takes to succeed in such a business.

Supports Three Families

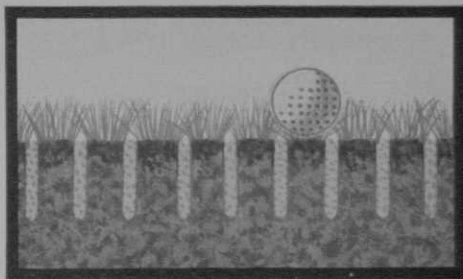
But Ralph doesn't hesitate to add that there are some bright things about owning and operating a Par 3 and range. These include pride of ownership, working for one's self and being in the constant company of congenial people. After a project of this kind is put on its feet, there can be enticing financial remunerations. Shortholes supports three families and still produces enough of a surplus for Bolander to set aside a reserve for future improvements. It also enables Ralph and his wife to spend several months in Florida every winter where they get a chance to catch up on their own neglected games and store up energy to withstand the season ahead.

Barber Leads Ryder Cup Team's Invasion of England

Jerry Barber, the new PGA champion, has been elected captain of the 1961 Ryder Cup team that will meet the British at Royal Lytham and St. Anne's GC, St. Anne's-on-the-Sea, England, Oct. 13-14. He will head a delegation that will include Bill Casper, Jr., Bill Collins, Dow Finsterwald, Jay Hebert, Gene Littler, Arnold Palmer, Sam Snead, Mike Souchak and Art Wall, Jr.

Ed (Porky) Oliver has been named honorary captain of the U. S. team and if his health permits, he will accompany the American players to England.

Sam Snead will be playing on his tenth Ryder Cup team. Finsterwald and Wall will be representing U. S. for the third time while other members of the team have either represented this country once or are playing their first Ryder Cup matches. The U. S. has won 10 of 13 matches since the biennial competition was started in 1927. Great Britain's last victory came in 1957.



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