



Sixth green at Fairless Hills is located within short distance of grammar school and playground. Greens are planted in C-1 and C-19.

Better Planning Would Have Helped Fairless Hills

By JOSEPH W. DRAGONETTI

It has been estimated that of the 200 or more golf courses currently being built about 15 or 20 per cent of them may be surrounded by housing developments. At numerous sites, golf facilities are being offered as an inducement to prospective home buyers. Probably typical of the golf community development combination is Fairless Hills, operated in connection with the Fairless Hills housing settlement about three miles from the Fairless Works of the U.S. Steel Corp., in Bucks County, Pa.

Fairless Hills was one of the earlier courses built in conjunction with a housing development and has had some significant experiences which might be helpful to others. Interviewed for this article were H. Fred Lening, manager of the club,

Developers didn't anticipate Golf Rush that has exploded even beyond growing population

William J. Williamson, Supt., and Harvey Miller, professional.

The 9-hole course was opened on Memorial Day, 1957, six years after the housing project was started. Fairless Hills is now a community of 2100 homes with a population of 8,000. The homes are built for persons in the middle income bracket. Play at the course is on a fee or annual membership basis and is open to residents of the community. Operation of the course is under the direct supervision of the Danherst Corp., Columbus, O.

Members do not have voting privileges

but two associations, formed by residents of the community, offer recommendations on course operations, improvements, etc. These are the Fairless Hills Women's Golf Assn., and the Men's Golf Assn.

President of the Club is John W. Galbreath, also head of the Danherst Corp. and one of the owners of the Pittsburgh Pirates. VP is George R. Galbreath, who fills a similar capacity with the developers corporation. In addition to managing the golf course, Lening is the chairman of the green committee and manages the other recreational facilities in the project including the bowling center and swimming pool.

Objectives behind the building of the course are stated in a resolution to members by John Galbreath and posted in the clubhouse. It states in part:

"Whereas it is universally recognized that proper and adequate recreational facilities unquestionably provide a substantial contribution to the moral development of a community's people, and to their general health and happiness; therefore be it:

"Resolved, that we, the directors of the Fairless Hills Golf Club, do hereby dedicate these golf facilities to the continued enjoyment of residents of Fairless Hills."

At Break-Even Point

Although the course was operated at a deficit in the first few years of operation, it is now at a break-even point, according to Lening. Income is derived from annual memberships of \$64, which gives all club privileges and includes individual playing fees, locker fees, etc., for all day. Saturday, Sunday and holiday fees are \$1.00 for nine holes and \$2.00 for all day. Guest green fees are \$2.00 on weekdays and \$3.00 on Saturday, Sunday and holidays.

The course was designed by Marion Packard of Columbus. It is short, but no pushover with a par of 31. There are four par 4 holes and five par 3s. The golfer must keep straight, as the course has many trees and traps and on every hole there is a water hazard. Length of the 9 holes is 2200 yards. The playing season is from April through Oct. or Nov., depending on the weather.

Some things done at Fairless Hills might have been done differently, according to those interviewed for this article, and there are a number of problems inherent in an operation of this kind which



Fairless Hills' management trio consists of (l to r) Fred Lening, general mgr., Harvey Miller, pro, and Bill Williamson, supt.



When course was dedicated nearly five years ago, Ben Fairless (l), retired U.S. Steel Corp. board chairman, and John W. Galbreath, pres. of the firm that built the layout, were among the speakers.

weren't realized when it was undertaken.

Should Have Been 18

The developers probably would have built a regulation 18-hole course if they had known that the golf demand would be so great. One of the limitations was the ground made available for the course. A swampland was reclaimed to build it and it was two years in construction. Actually, an 18-hole course can be simulated by putting in extra tees and the second half of the 18-hole game can be played from different angles. But it is agreed that this isn't satisfactory.

Another important phase of planning for the future is the contemplated installation of shower rooms. At first it was thought that no showers were necessary because the players lived so close to the course, but many members have expressed a preference for having shower rooms in the clubhouse and these may yet be built. The general feeling is that the clubhouse should have been made larger to take care of the social activity that goes on. There is however, a good pro shop

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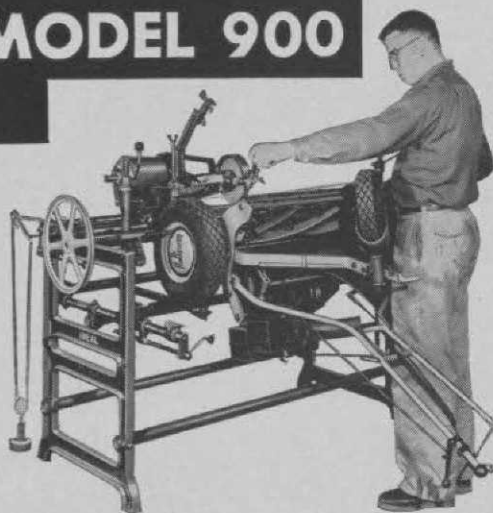
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right at the entrance to the clubhouse. Harvey Miller serves as an independent contractor in giving lessons. This is a part-time job for him as he also works for U.S. Steel Corp.

According to Bill Williamson, the supt., construction in the early operation of the course was hampered to some extent by vandalism. The management now feels that it has this problem under control because of a public relations and educational program it undertook. The developers promote the recreational facilities of Fairless Hills and the community itself through an active public relations program supervised by Kelly Associates of Philadelphia.

Promote Community Pride

About 48,000 rounds of golf are played each season. Arousing community pride in the appearance of the course as well as in other landscaping in the area has helped to keep the entire grounds in top condition. Williamson supervises a crew of three. He is also responsible for land-

scaping of the entire community and is an assistant to Lening in various recreational activities.

Harvey Miller says that teaching youngsters to play in a community of this kind is an especially interesting phase of his job. He started a youth program three years ago, partly to stop the vandalism on the course and also to teach the game. The kids start playing at Fairless Hills GC at the age of 12.

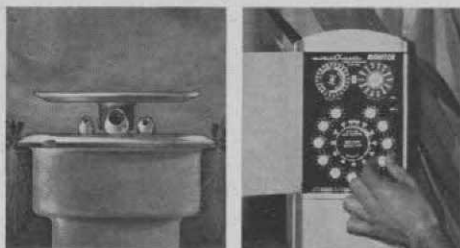
In the spring, Miller has clinics for the youngsters on the practice greens. In addition, he operates a winter course for six weeks at the nearby William Penn Junior high school, using the school's gymnasium for practice.

Fairless Hills ladies are showing an increasing interest in golf, Miller adds. Every Wednesday morning the course is exclusively reserved for them and the association has 30 to 40 ladies playing at one time. The group sponsors tournaments on the last Wednesday of every month. Both adults and youngsters play in several interclub tournaments. A number of members of other golf clubs in the Bucks County area often play at Fairless Hills. The Ladies Assn. also sponsors a Lower Bucks Tournament which is held the first



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weekend in June. The proceeds go to a local hospital.

The golf course is one of several excellent recreational facilities provided by the housing developers. The bowling center is operated at a profit which helps offset golf club deficits if they occur. It is one of the largest in the area and sponsors some important tournaments. Lening, whose office is in the bowling center, gives this facility his closest attention. He is one of the country's top bowlers and is a member of the Professional Bowlers Assn.

The developers of Fairless Hill concede that they made numerous mistakes, chief of which was in not allocating sufficient space for their course. The latter was due to their not having enough experience in a golf way and in not anticipating the hold that the game would take on people who live in the community. Yet, the Danherst Corp. feels that it has made an important contribution to the residents of Fairless Hills by providing them with a recreation facility that they might otherwise have to go miles to enjoy.

Final Figures Show 409 Courses Were Constructed in 1961

A final roundup of figures by the National Golf Foundation shows that 409 courses were put into play in 1961. These included 247 standard length layouts, 76 additions to existing courses and 86 Par 3s. At year's end there were nearly 6,200 regulation courses and about 460 Par 3s in the U.S.

California added 31 regulation courses in 1961 to again lead all states. Second was Florida with 22. Other states that added heavily to their layouts were Ohio, 18; Pennsylvania, 17; and Texas and Virginia, 15 each.

Par 3s continued to gain in popularity. About six years ago there were no more than 100 abbreviated courses in the country. The increase of 76 Par 3s in 1961 was almost 50 per cent higher than it had been the previous year.

New construction in 1961 represented an estimated investment of \$35,000,000 and provided playing facilities for at least a quarter-million more golfers, according to the Foundation.

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