

June — 1962



Gary Player-Jerry Barber TV match brought out Senior citizens in large groups. Barber was a little surprised at how extensively trapped Sun City, Ariz. course is.

An Old Age Benefit

Golf Is a Must in Webb's Retirement Cities

BY DICK KEMP

Golf is proving to be one of the valuable "old age benefits" to men who are pushed out of work by compulsory retirement plans. Retired men who played golf only intermittently when they were working now are playing considerably more rounds a year than typical younger fee course or private club golfer plays.

Reports from Florida, California and Arizona courses indicate that 100 rounds a year is not an uncommon amount of play by the golfer who is retired from business.

Pros tell of an astounding number of men and women in their late 50's or early 60's who are beginning golf at ranges, Par 3 courses or full size courses. The golf car has had something to do with this boom, but it is not mainly the cause of the elder citizens' debut in golf. Many of the older players haul bag carts.

There isn't much chance of real estate in a new development selling now unless it has a golf club as a part of the deal. At the first class "retirement community," the golf course is an essential. No one knows this better than Dell Webb, who has become a multimillionaire as a community builder.



Hundreds of elder citizens play golf five days a week at the course in Sun City, Ariz. They are literally guaranteed starting times.

Del Webb has retirement communities thriving in Arizona, California and Florida and is building more. Fielding Abbott, who was golf pro at Webb's first retirement community, Sun City, Ariz., now is planning and supervising golf for Webb.

Golf is an important part of community planning. A well designed, well maintained course can make readily salable property of some desolate areas. The cost of course construction is more than paid for by the premium selling price of land adjoining the course and the overall value of the course to the community.

Palm Springs Fine Example

The most spectacular exhibit of golf converting land that was cheap and unattractive desert into expensive real estate is in the Palm Springs area. When Johnny Dawson started promoting Thunderbird and building its golf course, the wildest dream wouldn't have conceived an adequate idea of the increased value that the introduction of golf brought to the desert.

At the Webb retirement communities the private country club atmosphere of golf is retained but for a lot less than metropolitan district country club prices. Per hour played, golf is one of the lowest

priced high enjoyments of the retired community man and woman.

The record of golf at Webb's "retirement" communities invariably shows speedy growth in play and in general interest.

Catches on Quickly

In 1960, the first year of the course at Sun City, Ariz., about 70 per cent of the play was by non-residents — generally players from Phoenix, about 12 miles away. But golf caught on so quickly among Sun City residents that in 1961 they played 70 per cent of all rounds. Last year, 40,000 18-hole rounds were played at Sun City, among them four televised matches for All-Star Golf.

Sun City resident Wayne Daily was shocked to see his course record of 62 shattered when Australia's Peter Thomson used only 60 strokes to beat Doug Sanders in a TV match. Jerry Barber was equally amazed when his caddie foot-tamped a green pockmark, and a resulting penalty cost him \$1,000 and the decision to Gary Player.

Sun City residents loved all the four, long days of the TV filming, though. That's the way it's been at Sun City, especially around the golf course — never a dull moment since the Del E. Webb



Del Webb's Kern City, patterned after Sun City, has a course designed by Arthur Jack Snyder.

Corporation opened the town for active retirement in 1960.

It was only natural that the New York Yankee co-owner, Webb, would keep sports and golf in mind while designing Sun City. Webb's only hobby is golf, a pastime now played less due to business pressures, but once carried on with such friends as Bob Hope and Bing Crosby.

Golf Comes First

Webb's builders had nine holes of the 6,400-yard 18 playable before the first residents moved in and the second nine open six months later. Opening is not far away on a second 18, reports Fielding Abbott.

Even before a horde of film technicians arrived to film the golf series last June, the Sun City course was being well advertised by Dave Marr, a 27-year-old touring pro.

Marr, cousin of Jack Burke, Jr. and a product of the Claude Harmon finishing school, won \$18,408 in prize money during 1961 while getting in transcontinental plugs for Webb's "active" retirement community.

In the meantime, Webb builders were busy creating communities duplicating Sun City in Kern City near Bakersfield, Calif., and at Sun City, near Tampa, Fla. Webb officials asked Abbott to seek out personable touring professionals to represent Kern City and Sun City, Fla. in a



Dave Marr, Lionel Hebert and Dave Ragan make up the retirement cities' pro staff.

manner already established by the clean-cut Marr.

Lionel Hebert now plays out of Kern City, which opened last October, and Sun City, Fla., opened Dec. 30, is represented by one of the hottest golfers on tour, Dave Ragan, Jr.

Put In Plugs

Elder golfers in the Webb retirement communities never miss a chance to pass out a brochure or boost living in a Webb town. Bakersfield-area golf fans, 600 strong, turned out recently at Kern City for a golf clinic by Marr, Lionel Hebert

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Retirement City Golf

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and young Dave Ragan.

Ragan and Hebert drew an even larger crowd when they appeared with Marr at Sun Valley in a similar exhibition the day following the Phoenix Open.

While designed for the average 85-110 golfer, the Webb courses are no push-overs and can be expanded to 7,000 yards from the 6,400, they now average, to accommodate championship play.

All five pros who took part in the All-Star Golf series had words of praise for the Sun City course. It was designed by Milt Coggins, pro at Phoenix's Encanto course for many years before resigning recently to devote full time to course architecture. Commendation for the condition of the Sun City course was showered on Supt. John Hanley, who has worked his magic at various courses for 41 years, and who is consulted on all Webb retirement community courses maintenance policies.

Heading the course maintenance department at Kern City is John Wysocki, a



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longtime supt. in Connecticut and fresh from five years of directing course maintenance in Santa Barbara.

Ward Wilcox, a name well known in Florida for service as president of the state GCSA, directs maintenance of the Sun City course around which homes are being built 17 miles south of Tampa.

Fielding Abbott's former resident pro and teaching duties at Sun City have been assumed by Bud Sower, former assistant at Waverly CC, Portland, Ore., who as an amateur scored 58 once and 59 twice. Sower is assisted by Bob Heisel and Eddie Brown.

Southpaw Bill O'Hara, a professional since 1947 and most recently a golf director in Fort Lauderdale, joined the Webb corporation last year as resident pro at the Sun City, Fla. layout. He is assisted by Dan Smith, an All-American basketball star from Bradley University, and former assistant at Cleveland's Oakwood Club where O'Hara also worked from 1949 to 1953.

Two Arizona golfers guide golf operations at Kern City: Al Starr, formerly resident pro at Oro Valley in Tucson, is assisted by Rex Wilson, twice runner-up for the Arizona amateur title and a graduate of Arizona State University.

Designed by Snyder

The Kern City course was designed by Jack Arthur Snyder, whose two brothers also have followed in the footsteps of their widely-known father as course superintendents.

Coggins, in addition to blueprinting the Sun City, Ariz. course, designed the layout at Sun City, Fla. and is now supervising another 18 holes that are under way at Sun City, Calif., where Webb builders' fourth retirement community is rising.

Half of the 400 members of the Sun City Golf Assn. play five days a week, says Abbott. Many more who don't belong to the association also play that often. Abbott estimates one-half of the 5,200 population gets out on the course at least several times a year.

As a member of the association with dues of \$5 a year, residents can try during a Stag or Ladies' Day tournament for coveted prizes.

A Sun City resident can golf for 30 per cent less than the public fee, or buy the right to play at anytime for a yearly \$112 (\$190 for a couple). Residents are assured every other starting

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time. Abbott reports Sun City's second 18 will be open before non-residents are competing for starting times.

Flat Charge For Cars

A charge of \$37.50 per car per year is made on the community's 100 privately owned electric golf cars to compensate for wear and tear on the course. The pro shops keep 16 of these type cars in constant use as rentals.

With a backlog of course experience and association with "names" in the golf world, the Webb firm is in an excellent position to continue to develop entire towns and housing developments which include golf courses. Already planned are courses for complete cities to be developed near the retirement communities, for a 4,100-acre ranch the Webb firm is developing at Santa Barbara, Calif. in association with Henry Crown, and for the 15,000 acres to be developed as a complete city in association with the Humble Oil and Refining Co. near Houston, Texas.

Brennan Elected to Head Metropolitan Golf Writers

John M. Brennan, Long Island Press has been elected president of the Metropolitan Golf Writers Association to head a new slate of officers for the 1962-63 season. He succeeds Lawrence Robinson of the New York World Telegram.

Other new officers are Des Sullivan of the Newark Evening News, first vp; Dave Eisenberg of the New York Journal American, vp and treasurer; and Gene Roswell of the New York Post, secretary.

Lincoln A. Werden of the New York Times, a past president, was named to the new post of permanent chairman of the dinner committee. He is in charge of the annual national awards banquet.

Werden is chairman of the board of governors, which includes Lawrence Robinson, Tom Paprocki of the Associated Press, Dana Mozely of the Daily News, Guido Cribari of the Westchester County Publishers Association, Maureen Orcutt of the New York Times, Harold Claasen of the Associated Press, Arthur Hoffman of the Newark Evening News, Bill Searby of Long Island Newsday and Fred Corcoran.

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