
Eastern Municipalities Look Out for the Golfer

*And Taxpayers Are Happy to See That
Golf Pays Its Way . . . and Then Some*



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Much has been written about the popularity of municipal golf courses. About 40 per cent of the nation's golfers play on the 932 tax supported golf facilities which represent about 15 per cent of the 6300 regulation courses in the United States.

The number of rounds of golf played on public golf courses each year is staggering. New York City reports that annual play ranges from 60,000 to 115,000 18-hole rounds on each of its ten 18-hole courses.

Philadelphia, Bethpage (N.Y.) State Park and Westchester County, N.Y., each report that from 250,000 to 280,000 rounds of golf are played annually on their five 18-hole public courses. Washington, D.C. has over 300,000 patrons each year on its 90 municipal holes. Pat Lordi, golf director for Nassau County (Long Island), N.Y., states that 287,000 18-hole rounds were played on Nassau

County's Salisbury Golf Course (54 holes) in 1961.

What are municipalities doing to provide more direly needed public golf courses? Often, suitably located open space areas are not available at any price to cities and towns desirous of building new courses or expanding existing facilities. Westport, Conn., solved this problem about two years ago by purchasing the existing 18-hole Longshore Country Club for \$1,925,000. The 182-acre facility was renamed Longshore Club Park when it became a muny operation.

With a \$10 annual family membership fee, plus \$2 green fees, it netted the city \$60,000 during its first year of operation. Several other Eastern suburban cities now have plans under consideration for purchase of existing country clubs.

The City of Philadelphia recently purchased the Old Homesburg 18-hole golf course located in the northeast section of the city. This addition gives Philadelphia a total of 108 holes of municipal golf.

Philadelphia also has a plan for placing

city owned property on bid for a lease arrangement to concessionaires for construction of public driving ranges and miniatures. Leases run for six years with options to renew for four more. Concessionaires are required to build and operate facilities according to specifications provided by the city. On expiration of the lease arrangements, facilities revert to the city.

According to William Capman, secretary to the city park commission, Philadelphia now has four driving ranges and 18-hole miniature golf operations under the jurisdiction of the park commission. Says Robert W. Crawford, city recreation commissioner, "We also have some plans for several par-3 golf courses".

Albin O. Olson, village manager, North Palm Beach, Fla., reports that that city has purchased the North Palm Beach 18-hole country club (it took possession in January, 1962) and is now operating it as a municipal setup on a daily fee basis.

County Golf Operations

Many counties are bringing needed courses into play. New Jersey is one of the leading states on the Eastern Seaboard with county golf operations. Among the New Jersey counties operating successful golf ventures are: Essex, 27 holes; Union, 45 holes; Passaic, 36 holes; Bergen, 18 holes; and Somerset, 18 holes. R. W. Myers, director of parks for Morris County, reports that the county will begin construction of an 18-hole county course this year. It is being financed by a bond issue. Several other New Jersey counties have golf course expansion programs under consideration.

Westchester County, N. Y., has an outstanding golf operation — five 18-hole courses with Charles E. Pound as general supt. Erie County (N. Y.) opened a new 18-hole course in 1960; Niagara County (N. Y.) opened 18 holes in 1961. Montgomery County, Maryland, also opened a new 18-hole county course in 1961. Allegheny County (Penna.) has had a successful golf operation for some time.

City-County Merger

Some county and city park departments are merging in an effort to plan and operate needed recreation facilities (including golf) more effectively. Says Wilbur E. Wright, director of parks, County of Monroe, N. Y.: "Last July the major parks of the city of Rochester merged with the parks of the County

of Monroe, under the jurisdiction of the county. Four formerly city operated 18-hole golf courses were included in the deal. Monroe County is now considering the development of additional golf facilities."

Cobb County, Ga., completed a \$1 million recreation center including the 18-hole O. B. Keeler course in 1960. The County purchased 500 acres near Kennesaw, Ga. and is using a portion of the acreage for choice building sites. The master plan calls for 450 lots. Here is an example of a county actually engaging in the real estate business. According to the Cobb County recreation authority, receipts from the sales of homesites will offset the cost of the recreation center. Thus this complete project is being made available at no cost to the taxpayer. Construction of Cobb County's magnificent recreation park was financed with revenue bonds through a Minneapolis, Minn., insurance company and will be repaid by the recreation authority over a 30-year period.

State Parks Courses

New York has found the practice of building public courses in many of its state parks very satisfactory. Its largest single golf operation is at Bethpage on Long Island, where it has five 18-hole golf courses operating out of a single clubhouse. New York has golf courses in six of its state parks and has plans for several more.

Some communities, among them Greensboro, N. C., that had closed their golf facilities because of integration problems, are now putting them back into play.

The City of Asheville (N. C.) has authorized its city manager, J. Weldon Weir, to explore the possibilities of a second 18-hole course. Last year 27,705 golfers — in addition to the 145 holding season memberships — played the existing 18-hole municipal layout. They paid \$38,151 and there was \$8,000 profit in the till at the end of the year. Actually, there are now about 80 communities that have tax supported golf facilities in some stage of planning in 17 eastern area states. The five leading states are New York with 15; Florida and Pennsylvania each with 12; Connecticut 7 and North Carolina 6.

Some municipalities are discovering that Par-3 courses are popular and profitable operations and are constructing such fa-

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Eastern Municipalities

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cilities within existing public parks. As of Jan. 1, 1962, there were 50 tax supported Par-3's in operation throughout the U. S. and another eight were under construction. Six years ago there were only about 100 Par-3's of all types (private, semi-private and muni) in the nation. Today there are about 500. The trend seems to be toward a longer type Par-3 with an average length of from 1400 to 1600 yards for nine holes. Some developers are putting two or three Par-4 holes in each nine for more variety and interest. This results in a Par-60 type course for an 18-hole layout.

Non-Residents Pay More

The practice of charging higher green fees to non-city or non-county residents is quite prevalent at many county and city golf operations, especially if they are located in densely populated areas. A typical example is the Bridgeport, Conn. policy. Robert Schultz, superintendent

of recreation for Bridgeport, reports that registered citizens may play 18 holes on weekdays for \$1.50; non residents pay \$2.50. On weekends and holiday the green fees are \$2.00 and \$3.50, respectively.

Golf Foundation Aids

Municipalities planning new golf facilities or desiring suggestions on operational procedures may find the service of the National Golf Foundation (804 Merchandise Mart, Chicago, Ill.) helpful. The Foundation's purpose is to broaden opportunities for everyone to enjoy golf by assisting in the development of more facilities of all types, wherever needed. Its function is to gather information in all areas of golf from every possible source and make this information available to anyone desiring it.

Can Be Profitable

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own way but often produces revenue far in excess of its operating and maintenance costs. A nationally recognized standard for tax supported golf courses is one 18-hole course for the first 20,000 population, plus one 18-hole course for each 30,000 additional.

Too Much, Too Soon

One of life's little ironies victimized Marilyn Smith just prior to the Dallas Civitan Open recently when she made her first hole-in-one after 21 years of golf. It occurred on the 185-yard third hole (she used a 4-iron) and came in the pro-am which preceded the tournament. Marilyn was elated but she pointed out, "If this ace had been shot during the actual tournament, I would have won \$10,000. Such is life."

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Scott Program Reclaims Evansville, Ind., Course

A pamphlet, recently released by O. M. Scott & Sons, Marysville, O., tells of the troubles encountered in 1961 at the John F. Fendrich GC Evansville, Ind., because of Ohio valley humidity which led to fungus disease, insects and finally the string incursion of weeds. The course had to be brought into shape for a big fall tournament, and so a Scott program in which Turf Builder, Halt and Scutl were applied, was resorted to. These products were used as suggested in the reclamation schedule and by Sept., the course was not only ready for the invasion of the tournament players, but possibly was in the best shape in its history.

Club and Range Finder

Cad-o-Matic, made by Cad-o-Matic, PO Box 2258, Santa Ana, Calif., is an unusual new club and range finder used to show yardage and specify the correct iron to use. The instrument is sighted on the pin and a sliding device is lowered or raised to determine the yardage and proper iron for the distance. Packaged in an attractive plaid wallet, it makes an excellent gift.

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