

*Overcome Formidable  
Construction Barriers*

## **Golfers to Play in Old Pirate Lair on Dauphin Isle**

**B**uilding the new Isle Dauphine Golf Club has been the most challenging, the most frustrating — and the most rewarding — experience I've encountered in over 39 years of golf course construction work!" says Charlie Maddox, head of the Maddox Construction Co., Batavia, Ill.

Maddox refers to a soon-to-be-completed 18 hole regulation golf course built on sand and swamp on historic and scenic Dauphin Island in Mobile Bay, just four miles off the Alabama coast.

Until a few years ago, when the Mobile Chamber of Commerce conceived the idea of developing the four-mile long island into a resort and residential community, it was unoccupied, except for a few occasional fishermen and Air Force early warning station. Last year, after the completion of the four-mile Dauphine Island Bridge, visitors started to flock to the island to enjoy its recreational attractions, its beauty and historical landmarks, some of which date back to the seventeenth century.

### **\$1 Million Subscribed**

The Dauphine Island Plan was conceived, organized and activated by a special committee of the Mobile Chamber of Commerce, headed by Mr. S. Blakely McNeely, one of Mobile's better-known amateur golfers. The developers subscribed over a million dollars to get the project under way. All available land was platted into streets, parks, business areas and residential lots — and all lots were sold within two days following announcement of their availability!

Proceeds from the sale of homesites on the island were allocated for use by the various municipal departments (streets, water, beaches and parks) and to the



Earth mover hauls tons of silt from Alligator Lake more than one mile to Isle Dauphine course. At high tide machine often ran with one wheel in the Gulf of Mexico.



Air view of Dauphine GC. Gulf is in foreground and clubhouse and pool are at extreme left of the photo. Course is watered from the fresh water lake.

property owners' association. This latter organization was also granted sufficient acreage for the development of a private club, the present Isle Dauphine Club. Money derived from the Property Owners Association's share of lot sales was placed in escrow to guarantee the construction and ten years operation of the club, without further cost to the property owners!

#### Automatic Members

Under this probably unique arrangement, present and future property owners automatically become members of the new club without payment of an initiation fee or any contribution toward the construction of the club. The only cost to members is a greens fee charge of \$2.50 per round. Guests recommended by members pay an 18-hole fee of \$4.00 which includes full use of clubhouse facilities.

When the Maddoxes, Charles Sr. and Jr., first surveyed the proposed course site they uncovered some discouraging facts that added up to seemingly insurmountable construction problems:

1.) The site consisted almost entirely of sand dunes. There was some good standing pine and a spectacular beach of white sand. This same white sand covered the entire course area with scarcely a trace of soil or organic material of



Digging silt from bottom of Alligator Lake to be used as topsoil on the course. Lake was pumped dry by Maddox firm and about 30,000 yards of silt was removed.

any kind. As a matter of fact, the only soil available to the builders was contained in a swamp and a lake about four miles from the course site. There were no roads over which dirt could be hauled and the trucks and grading machinery could not negotiate the soft sand.



No. 18 green at Isle Dauphine is just out of the picture on the right of this view of clubhouse.

2.) Both the inland swamp and the swampy areas of the course site contained much standing water — in some places to a depth of three feet.

3.) The salt-impregnated sand of the beach blew and shifted with every breath of wind — toward and onto the prospective fairways, tees and greens.

4.) The existing sand dunes were sharp-crested and difficult to grade, and in great need of topsoil for the establishment of turf.

### Gulf Is Backdrop

On the credit side was incalculable beauty. The Gulf of Mexico is visible from some point on every hole of the golf course. The view from the crest of the sand dunes is particularly breath-taking since all of the course lies beneath the viewer from this point and the brilliant expanse of the Gulf presents a sparkling backdrop behind the dark green of the pine groves.

According to Maddox, the finished course will be a typical 'old country' seaside layout with sand bordering the fairways in the dunes area. To be off the fairway is, literally, to be in a sand-trap. On many holes the sand must be carried from the tee in order to reach the fairway turf, in the manner of famed Pine Valley. Tees are long — up to 240 feet — and strategically angled to permit wide variation in the length of the course (from 5,800 to 7,000 yards) and in the play of most holes. Greens average nearly 5,000 square feet, with the largest nearly 8,000 square feet in area.



This gives you an idea of the brush that had to be cut away as Maddox crews proceeded with building of Dauphine course.

While many difficulties were overcome in building Isle Dauphine, Maddox says the principal problem consisted of building up the swampy areas for drainage. The hauling of soil from swamp to course site was accomplished by installing a water pipeline along a haul road to the beach. By keeping the sand of the road wet, heavy equipment could travel to the beach where natural wave action kept the surface wet and firm. Crawler tractors, one pulling and one pushing, put topsoil in place on the course where it was rototilled into the top 6 to 8 inches of all

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## Dauphin Island Course

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planting areas. Rubber-tired earthmoving machinery required the help of two to three crawlers each to negotiate high points on the dunes.

Tees, greens and fairways were planted vegetatively with 328 Bermuda, selected because it successfully withstands covering with sand and is best adjusted to the conditions found on the island.

All swampy areas on the site had to be built up and fairways crowned for drainage. Fill for this purpose was drawn from the lakes excavated on the course. An overflow drainage line, on pilings had to be extended out into the Gulf to keep water in the lakes down to a workable level while fill was being removed. A row of piling had to be placed on either side of this tile overflow line and the line was lashed to the piling with cable to keep it in place against wave action from the Gulf.

### Sand Wetted Down

Maddox says blowing sand from the beach remains a serious problem. However, he reasons that wet sand does not blow and wetting seemed to be the only

way to stop the sand from shifting while waiting for vegetative growth to take hold, so a 4-inch pipeline was installed to water the area when the wind blows.

The planting and seeding of vegetation carried out along the dunes consisted chiefly of the use of aggressive native beach grass which is being carefully nurtured by fertilization and irrigation. Maddox also planted and seeded the vetches — Japanese clover, lespedezas, Coastal and K37 Bermudas — all high-growing species, to help control blowing sand.

Mother nature's help was enlisted to solve another serious problem. Because the beach on the Gulf side of the course is relatively low, Maddox had to devise a way to prevent heavy wave action from sweeping in onto the course. To do this, a new sand dune is being created to act as a 'levee'. Maddox crews built a row of brush, logs and pine boughs along the waterside to catch windblown sand. As the sand collects and piles up to the top of the brush-log barrier, bulldozers with brush-digger attachments are used to lift the material above the piled sand, to catch and retain still more wind-blown sand. This process will be repeated until



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the new dune reaches the necessary height to insure against damage from unusually high wave action in the future.

Salt in the sand is being leached out with water from the new lakes on the course which, fortunately, are fresh water with no appreciable salt content, according to Maddox.

Maddox says the biggest asset found on the site was the presence of several small fresh water lakes which his crews enlarged to obtain fill and to make them more effective reservoirs for future irrigation of the course. He is convinced they are spring-fed since, during construction, approximately 1,000 gallons per minute continuously flowed through the overflow line to the Gulf without any appreciable lowering of the lake levels. Fresh water from the lakes was used continuously during construction to leach out the salt in the sand near the Gulf side.

When officially opened for play later this year, Isle Dauphine GC will be among the most beautiful and challenging golf layouts in the southern U. S. And it will be an outstanding example of what can be accomplished with modern equipment, construction techniques and ingenuity to build a golf course where it seemed no golf course could be built!