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City Not Immune When • Negligence Is Involved

By WILLIAM JABINE

The question of whether a city which provides a restaurant in the clubhouse of its municipal golf course is acting in a governmental or proprietary capacity was answered in a qualified manner recently by the supreme court of the state of Washington. The high court reversed a decision of the superior court, King County, which had dismissed the complaint on the ground that the city was exercising a governmental function and so was immune under the doctrine of governmental immunity. The supreme court ruled that the plaintiff's complaint contained allegations sufficiently broad to permit evidence which would show that the city was performing a proprietary function in providing the restaurant facilities, even though the restaurant * was leased to a private operator.

The supreme court's opinion described the event that resulted in the lawsuit by quoting the allegations of the plaintiff's complaint as follows: "The plaintiff (appellant), Earl A. Lightner, brought actions against the defendants (respondents), Neil Balow and the city of Seattle, to recover for personal injuries sustained when he slipped and fell in the restaurant portion of a clubhouse located on the premises of the Jefferson Municipal GC in Seattle.

Defendants Negligent

"On the ninth day of April, 1960, at about 3 p.m., the plaintiff entered the restaurant portion of the said clubhouse as a business invitee. Upon entering the > dining room portion of the said restaurant he slipped and fell, twisting and wrenching his back and spine and striking the back portion of his head upon the floor. The plaintiff's fall was caused by the negligence of the defendants. They permitted the surface of the floor to be in an extremely slippery and dangerous condition without any signs or warnings when the same could and should have been placed upon said premises. They failed to provide any anti-skid ingredient, surfacing, or other material when the same could and should have been provided in the ordinary care and operation of said premises."

In ruling that the trial court should not have dismissed the complaint against the

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city of Seattle on the ground that the city was performing a governmental function in providing restaurant facilities for golfers, the supreme court said in part: "Whether the city is immune from liability against this asserted claim depends upon whether its operation of the activities constituted a proprietary or governmental function.

Operation Proprietary

"The allegations in the plaintiff's complaint are sufficiently broad to permit evidence of a state of facts which would prove that the operation was a proprietary rather than a governmental function. The plaintiff, under his pleadings, is entitled to introduce evidence on this issue and the trial court, therefore, erred in holding the operations of the activities in question was a governmental function prior to the consideration of the evidence essential to such a determination."

One justice concurred in the reversal but contended that in Washington the sovereign immunity of municipal corporations has been abrogated by statute, thus making the question of the exact nature of the function unimportant. (Lightner v. Balow, 370 P.2nd 982.)



Par 3 Has Big Draw

(Continued from page 74)

tric 1,000-watt mercury floodlights: 103 on the Par-3, 18 on the driving range, 3 on the putting green and 2 on the chipping area. On the miniature, 15 filament units are mounted on low poles. Alma officials report there is no glare, no unusual presence of bugs and balls can be clearly sighted at all times.

Maintenance Cost Offset

Alma's initial cost for mercury luminaires was four times more than what would have been required for filament units. However, since its season is considerably longer than average, the much lower operating and maintenance cost of mercury will quickly offset the higher initial cost.

Lighting details show that the luminaires are spaced about 25 yards apart and mounted atop 40-foot poles. Poles carry from one to four luminaires aimed in different directions and to different areas to minimize expenses for poles and their installation.

Golf at night has received increasing attention as it has moved from miniature course to pitch-and-putt and, within the