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*Assemble All the Facts
Before Making Investment*

Solid Groundwork Averts Disaster in Course Planning

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The increasing interest in golf is encouraging more and more individuals and groups to build courses to meet the growing demand for facilities.

Land values, cost of construction and maintenance and the time interval from ground-breaking to course completion (Usually 12 months or more) are factors that affect the success of any golf project. A properly designed layout with acceptable construction specifications must be matched with an accepted plan for financing and operation. Before taking any definite action, however, an investor should investigate the feasibility of the entire project for the area concerned.

My work during recent years has been with thousands of golf course planning groups. The following ideas have been culled from this experience and have proved helpful in the development of many successful golf ventures.

Is It Economically Sound?

You want to be sure that there is sufficient income to at least pay the construction and operation costs of your course. In planning a daily fee operation, check the population within a 10-mile and a 20-mile radius; the population growth over the past two decades (nation-wide it was about 36 per cent); the number of daily fee courses now serving your area; and recent course failures.

Determine the economic characteristics of the area — the principle types of em-

ployment. What is the per capita income? Is income increasing along with regional and national trends? What are the unemployment characteristics?

Planners of private country clubs need to know the number of country clubs now in the area, sizes and classes of memberships and existing initiation fees and annual membership dues. In addition, they should know if there waiting lists at existing clubs or if similar projects have failed recently.

Selection of the Site

The next step is site selection. The size and shape of the proposed plot should be 50 to 80 acres for a 9-hole regulation length layout, and 110 to 160 acres for 18 holes. Don't be afraid of irregularly shaped plots — they often present unique opportunities for interesting designs. Gently rolling land and a few trees add to the desirability of the site. Consider purchasing adjacent land, also, as a possible investment for future home sites.

Accessibility is important. So is soil content, for the success of your course will depend greatly on the quality of the turf. Soil samples of the sites you are considering will be analyzed at small cost by state or county agricultural departments. State agricultural experiment stations are a valuable source of help on possible problems of turf development and maintenance.

Electric power, ample water supply and

Land acquisition (200 acres)		\$ 96,000
Topographic map of area	\$ 1,350	
Construction of 18-hole course	158,000	
Supt. of construction (to be retained)	6,000	
Field engineering	1,000	
12-acre pond on course	2,500	
Watering system	50,000	
Four rain shelters on course	1,000	
Well, piping system and four drinking fountains	2,000	
Total for golf facility		221,850
Golf course architect fees		20,000
Golf course maintenance equipment		20,000
Maintenance equipment shed		4,000
Access road		5,500
Parking area		7,000
Miscellaneous contingencies		10,000
Total budget for project exclusive of clubhouse but including land costs		\$384,350

proper drainage conditions are essential considerations. In estimating construction costs on any site, take into account the amount of clearing necessary — dense woodlands and excessive stone can cause your building costs to soar.

Finally, does the site have natural golf features? Rolling terrain, creek valleys, woodlands, ravines and ponds simplify the creation of an interesting course.

Wait! Don't Buy Yet!

If you find a site that you think is perfect, don't rush the deal! Consult a capable golf course architect and get his advice. He'll lend his experience to your ideas. You'll get an idea of construction costs before you are legally bound to a particular site.

Probably there is no more important step in the complex course developing operation than your selection of a course architect. In many ways, the responsibility for the success of the course is on his shoulders. Assure yourself of your architect's ability. Visit courses that he has built and satisfy yourself that he can deliver. Then enter into a written agreement to avoid misunderstandings in course specifications, costs, terms, and other details. Naturally, costs will vary depending on the amount of clearing, size of the

greens and tees and the type of construction.

Plan Your Expenses

With all facts in hand, you are ready to prepare your construction budget. While costs vary greatly from course to course, four basic factors largely determine the overall cost: (1) cost of the land, (2) natural assets and liabilities of the site, (3) labor and equipment costs in the area, and (4) type of design. The size and quality of greens and tees, type of construction and irrigation system play an important part in the total cost. Not including land costs, a 9-hole regulation course may range from \$40,000 to \$150,000 and an 18-hole layout, \$75,000 to \$350,000. The accompanying sample budget shows the various items that should be included in your construction budget.

Sample budget

In preparing a construction budget, certain items are often overlooked. The budget (above) recently prepared for a mid-Atlantic 18-hole golf project, can be used as a guide and may help to preclude omissions:

During the past five years financing for golf courses has loosened quite a bit.

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PGA Tournaments

- April 16-19—Houston Classic, Sharpstown CC
\$50,000
- 23-26—Texas Open Inv., Oak Hills CC,
San Antonio, Tex. \$40,000
- 30-May 3—Tournament of Champions, Des-
ert Inn CC, Las Vegas, Nev. \$65,-
000
- 30-May 3—Waco Turner Open Inv., Turner
CC, Burneyville, Okla. \$20,000
- May 7-10—Colonial National Inv., Colonial CC,
Ft. Worth, Tex. \$75,000
- 14-17—Oklahoma City Open, Quail Creek
CC, \$35,000
- 21-24—Memphis Open Inv., Colonial CC,
\$50,000
- 27-31—"500" Festival Open Inv. Speed-
way (Ind.) GC \$70,000
- June 4-7—Thunderbird Classic, Westchester
CC, Rye, N.Y. \$100,000
- 11-14—Buick Open, Warwick Hills CC,
Grand Blanc, Mich. \$55,000
- 18-20—USGA Open, Congressional CC,
Washington, D.C. \$90,000
- 25-28—Cleveland Open, Highland Park
CC, \$100,000
- July 2-5—Whitemarsh Open, Whitemarsh CC,
Philadelphia Pa. \$125,000
- 9-12—open
- 16-19—PGA Championship, Columbus
(O.) CC \$50,000 (minimum)
- 23-26—Insurance City Open, Wethersfield
(Conn.) CC \$50,000
- 30-Aug. 2—Canadian Open, Pine Grove
CC, St. Luc, P.Q. \$50,000
- Aug. 6-9—Western Open, Tam O'Shanter CC,
Niles, Ill. \$50,000 (minimum)
- 10—Children's Memorial Hospital Pro-
Am, Onwentsia Club, Lake Forest,
Ill. \$12,000
- 13-16—St. Paul Open, Keller GC, Purse to
be announced
- 20-23—American Golf Classic, Firestone
CC, Akron, O. \$50,000
- 27-30—Carling World Open, Oakland Hills
CC, Birmingham, Mich. \$200,000

Make Solid Course Plans

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Some banks, insurance companies and other such institutions have become interested in course investment. The U. S. Departments of Agriculture, of Commerce, the Housing and Home Finance Agency and the Small Business Administration all have financial assistance programs that can be used in course development. Cities, counties and states can also seek assistance from the Urban Renewal and

Ladies PGA Tournaments

- April 10-12—Baton Rouge (La.) Ladies' Open, Sherwood Forest CC, \$7,500
 17-19—Peach Blossom Open, Spartanburg (S. C.) CC, \$7,500
 23-26—Titleholders Championship, Augusta CC, Augusta, Ga. \$7,500 (minimum)
- May 1-3—Civitan Open, Alexandria G&CC, Alexandria, La. \$8,000
 8-10—Squirt Ladies' Open, Glen Echo CC, St. Louis, Mo., \$12,500
 15-17—Civitan Open, Muskogee (Okla.) CC, \$8,000
 21-24—Civitan Open, Glen Lakes CC, Dallas, Tex. \$12,500
 29-31—Babe Zaharias Open, Beaumont (Tex.) CC, \$8,500
- June 5-7—To be announced
 12-14—Sponsor to be announced, Turf Valley CC, Ellicott City, Md. \$10,000
 19-21—Lady Carling Eastern Open, Pleasant Valley CC, Worcester, Mass. \$10,000 (minimum)
 26-28—To be announced

the Area Redevelopment Administrations.

Adequate financing is of the utmost importance. Maintenance costs are usually higher for a time on newly constructed courses. If your project is a daily fee operation, it may take a year or two for it to become established. Assure yourself that you have ample financing to complete the course properly and to operate it for a given time.

Maintenance Cost Factor

The cost of labor in your area will be the deciding influence on the total maintenance cost. Usually, two dollars out of every three go for salaries of the supt., foremen and laborers. Nationwide, maintenance costs per hole average \$3,394, of which \$2,156 represents cash payrolls. During the past decade, maintenance costs per hole have increased 43 per cent.

This article is condensed from a speech made by Eckhoff at the Cornell University turf conference in Ithaca, N.Y. in February.

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