

# Indio Sends Out Scouts Before It Builds



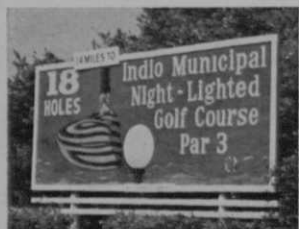
*It seems like everyone in this desert town in California was out looking over courses before the city put in its munny layout . . . With the groundwork so carefully planned, it was almost impossible to go wrong when the construction was undertaken*

By **DON CURLEE**

**T**he California desert area around Palm Springs is well-known for its golf courses, but few of them are public. So the city of Indio decided that its golfing citizens should have access to their own course. It threw powerful lights into the bargain so they can enjoy it without braving the 120 degree daytime temperatures that summer brings. The course was put in play last November.

The 18-hole layout surrounds a 3-acre lake which gives the scene an oasis-like character that is intensified at night by the reflection of the lights against an otherwise black desert sky. It includes a 30 tee driving range, 280 yards long, and a practice putting green of nearly 19,000 square feet.

Golf course architect, Lawrence Hughes, complemented the naturally rolling dunes with a few undulations of his own to give the 2,721-yard course a pleasing and challenging character. The longest hole measures 230 yards and the shortest, one of four that cross or border the lake, is 100.





Indio put a little extra into its lighting system and near daytime brightness is the result. Some people call the course "the oasis in the night."

Driving desert winds made it necessary to reseed some of the common bermuda fairways more than once so that opening barely took place on schedule. The last three months of preparation were guided by Jack Mann who was hired as construction supervisor as seeding began. He had performed some conditioning miracles in previous assignments, and many of those who know the obstacles he faced in those hectic three months, say he performed one at Indio. When the course opened he became pro-supt.

City manager, Tom Selman, made the first contribution to Indio's municipal golf course. He had the imagination and vision to see it as it is today when it was nothing more than rolling waste, an 80-acre parcel purchased by the city



328 Bermuda greens hold up well under daytime examination. Pro shop is in background and off to the right is 280-yard driving range.



Jack Mann (r), who put the finishing touches on Indio course, stayed on as supt. and also runs the pro concession.

many years ago as an airport site. Subsequent considerations made it inadequate for airport use.

Even the state legislature cooperated unknowingly. It passed a law in 1959 allowing cities like Indio to issue revenue bonds for recreational facilities. Indio was the second city in California to do this.

Selman called in a financial consultant, J. B. Hanauer & Co. of Beverly Hills, and an industrial planning engineer, Woolacott Engineers of South Pasadena. A combined report of the two indicated, "winter and summer population is adequate to generate enough play to give sufficient operating income."

Income and cost projections submitted by the two gave Selman the support he needed to begin pushing the golf course project. At the same time he formed a group to do most of the talking for him.

The citizens committee did a lot more than talk. Selman was joined on the



Jack Mann, City Manager Tom Selman, who did so much to put Indio Par 3 course on the golf map, and city officials are seen as they complete dedication round.

committee by two members of the city council, a shoe store owner, a florist, an accountant and a haberdasher. All are golfers. In task forces of two or three, the committee scouted every Par-3 course in Southern California and spent hours playing, analyzing, and discussing them, especially the lighted ones. They found some weaknesses that even course operators had not detected. They asked many pros and supts. what they would insist on if they could start all over with their own courses. They relied heavily on advice from the National Golf Foundation and the USGA.

#### Didn't Want This

Architect Hughes had already completed preliminary design when the revelation struck the committee members unanimously that the one feature they wanted above all in Indio's course was

challenge. They remembered the experience of one Southern California course where golfers consistently preferred the back nine and steered clear of the front side.

The peripatetic committee sensed an increasing acceptance of Par-3 courses in general and night-lighted golf in particular wherever it went. This reconnaissance resulted in Selman's decision to anchor the Indio investment even more firmly than originally planned by increasing the light intensity almost 30 percent above accepted standards. He believed it would be a hedge against a possible race for the brightest lighted course — which still may occur.

Although the redesign of the lighting system cost an extra \$15,000, Selman had little trouble selling it to his committee when he read the engineer's report saying that the same project would cost about \$85,000 if it should become advisable after five years of operation.

The end result is 173 lights on 97 standards that burn 173,000 watts per hour and give considerably more than the recommended 5-8 footcandles for tees  
(Continued on page 64)



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## Indio Scouts Before It Builds

*(Continued from page 26)*

and greens. Players never lose sight of balls in flight unless they are hopelessly sliced or hooked into the desert dark.

Preliminary considerations included a manual irrigation system, but that was revised too. Careful study revealed that labor, control, maintenance and effectiveness were all on the side of an automatic system. And just to make sure, a manual override was included so spot irrigation can be done whenever it is needed.

"In the summer we expect to have play until 1 or 2 a.m.," Selman explains. "We can put on sufficient water with the automatic system in six hours a night." The system's capacity is 1¾ inches of water per week over the 33 acres that are in play.

The sprinkler system is supplied by the course's own 400-foot well. The lake, with a plastic lining, serves as a reservoir from which the water is pumped under pressure into the network of underground pipe that feeds the sprinklers.

Once all of the features were designed

into the course, construction required less than a year. The careful preliminary work of the committee took almost twice as long.

Selman is particularly pleased with the financing, and even more pleased that play during the first months of operation gives promise of the earliest payoff that he or any of the planning committee hoped for. The city's credit is not at stake in this financing arrangement and the course is self sustaining.

Amortization of revenue bonds was set up for a 25 year period but Selman and his committee optimistically predict that it will be made in 14 years. Six months after opening, the course's income was meeting its operating costs with only the debt service to be met.

An average increase in play of 20-30 rounds per week charted in March indicated that the committee's optimism is justified. This brought the weekly average to 750, approaching the 1,150 needed between October and November to retire the bonds in 14 years.

The accelerated payment schedule requires an average weekly play in the summer of 600, but indications are that

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those long summer evenings may attract many more players.

## Use Financial Projections

When it came time to place the approval of the \$475,000 revenue bond before Indio's citizens, a committee of 25 was organized. The members leaned heavily on the projections of the financial counselors for their appeal to the public. The issue carried by a 6 to 1 vote.

Green fees are \$2 in the daytime and \$2.50 at night during the week. On weekends the daytime rate is 50¢ higher and the night rate advances 25¢. A junior rate of \$1 is in effect all the time.

A popular special event has gone over big with Indio businessmen, a 9-hole competitive event every Friday noon, 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. every day. Those who enter the Friday tournament pay an additional 75¢ which goes toward prizes. Often they wolf down a sandwich, play nine holes in the tournament and still get back to their offices by 1:30 or 2.

The municipality has recognized the unusual combination of talents possessed

by Jack Mann with an unusual kind of contract. He received a base salary plus 95 per cent of the gross from the pro shop, the driving range and the club and cart rentals. The other five per cent goes to the city. Mann receives all his lesson fees, of course, and the city gets the green fees.

Mann is required to bond all employees of the shop, collect all fees, serve as starter, manager and supervisor of maintenance personnel. The snack bar, which shares half of the handsome clubhouse, is operated by an experienced local restaurant owner who returns 7½ per cent of the gross to the city.

## Bi-Level Merchandising

Because the Indio course is introducing golf to a lot of its players for the first time Mann follows a kind of two-level merchandising plan — lower priced equipment for beginners, and topgrade equipment for those who are experienced golfers.

"We're an incubator," Mann says, and he makes the most of it by catering to Juniors, for whom he conducts free clinics each Saturday morning with help

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from his assistants, Edna Mac Clean and Jack Laxson.

Mann is extremely proud of the appearance and condition of the course. To keep it green when the Bermuda is dormant he overseeded with seaside bent and common rye. Mann worries most about compaction. He has outlined a plan of soil testing every three months to keep tabs on its condition. The greens were seeded with Tifgreen 328 Bermuda.

A responsive and cooperative community spirit lies behind Indio's accomplishment. City planners also have enough foresight to think about nine more holes on an unused parcel of the original 80 acres. They are sure they will need them.

### Claussen, Jeffrey Added to Golf Foundation Staff

Jerry Claussen has been added to the National Golf Foundation's field staff as Mountain States region director, and Charles Jeffrey has been appointed director of publications.

Claussen makes his headquarters in Denver and covers a new region made up of 10 states between the Canadian and Mexican borders. He was graduated from the University of Oregon's school of Journalism in 1956 and is a former newspaper golf writer and editor.

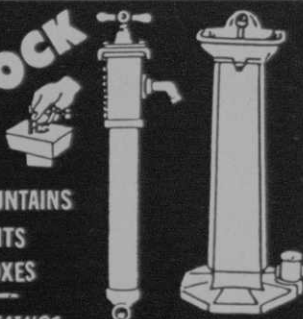
Jeffrey is the Foundation's public relations specialist and is in charge of editing and revising the organization's publications. A University of Texas graduate, Jeffrey is a onetime advertising and sales promotion man and also was connected with two Chicago newspapers.

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