

Bigger and better par-threes

The beautiful Blue Rock layout on Cape Cod is a fine example of how a modern par-three can attract every type of golfer—from novice to expert.

By ABBOTT BAKER

Businessmen in general have become aware that older people, to borrow an apt if ungrammatical phrase, "have never had it so good." Better living conditions, medical care and old-age retirement plans have created a leisure-time market that can be turned into profit.

Certain areas of the golf business have not been caught napping in this respect. One such area is the development of par-3 courses. They first started around amusement centers, but now they are being built with all the characteristics of full-length layouts. One such par-three is the beautiful Blue Rock course located in

a small town called South Yarmouth, in the heart of Cape Cod.

The proprietors, John Davenport and his son Palmer, or "Pete" as he is better known, were inspired by a par-3 set-up they saw in Palm Beach, Florida. They had been interested for some time in building a course, but they hoped to construct something a little different and with ample eye appeal.

Knowing what to build and why, the next step was the selection of a site. The Davenports eventually decided on the Mid-Cape area, and for sound reasons: accessibility of the location to major roads and also to their market—primarily retired people making their year-round homes on the Cape. In addition, there were few courses open to the general public in this particular area.

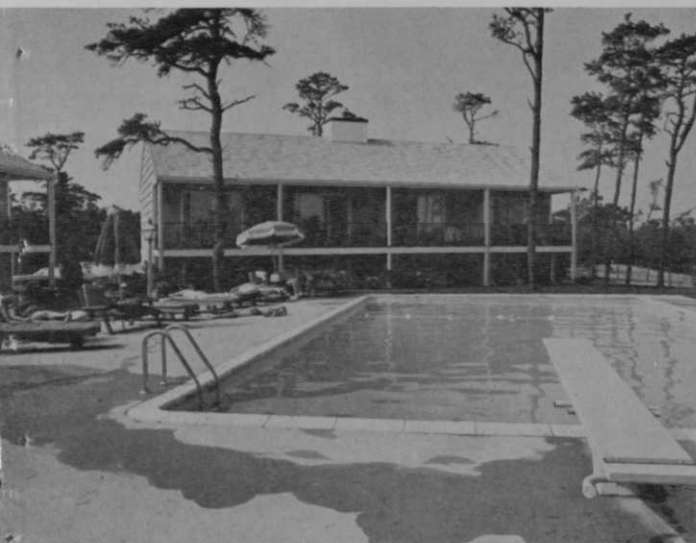
The most practical consideration in pinpointing exactly where and how was water. Neglecting the obvious, many course owners do not make a thorough investigation of where to get enough water to keep their courses "alive" and lush.

Finding some acreage containing a cedar swamp with 30,000 to 35,000 cubic yards of peat which when dredged out would be displaced by an equal amount of water, the Davenports were immediately convinced that this was it.

The dredged peat turned out to be a real plus factor, along with another natural resource—sand. They were able to make their own loam, which if bought



The Blue Rock Club House, designed in the tradition of Cape Cod Early American.



Palmer "Pete" Davenport, right, Blue Rock co-owner, has created a golfers' paradise on Cape Cod. The Motor Inn, left, is just a nine-iron away from the first hole.

through regular channels, can be an expensive proposition. From the cedar swamp, that has now long since been turned into a rather pretty pond, they can pump 250 gallons of water per minute, which is adequate indeed for a par-3 course.

The Davenports desired one basic distinction from other par-3s; they wanted to build a GOLF COURSE and not an incidental attraction in a lighted amusement park with average holes a mere 70 to 80 yards long.

Wanting something on the idea of the par-3 layout in Palm Beach, they wisely employed the talents of golf course architect Geoffrey Cornish. He designed a course that was indeed a challenge. On it, you can hit every club in your bag from the pitching wedge to the driver—there are many full-length courses that can't make this boast. The course is now four years old. The first bulldozer started clearing in June of 1960, and construction was completed in May of '61—just 11 months.

The course measures a lengthy 2,803 yards, with 18 par-three holes.

It is built through dense pines and marked by two very demanding water holes, the ninth and 18th.

Thanks to the ingenuity of Cornish, every hole has a personality all its own. The bunkers are akin to those on the traditional Scottish seaside links and are meticulously kept. The beach sand in the traps is the best to hit out of and also aesthetically the most pleasing to look at. Cornish was influenced by all the great par-3s he had seen or designed throughout the world.

The greens are on the large side, averaging 8,000 square feet. Cornish has shaped them so that no two are similar and this adds to the visual appeal of the entire layout. In addition, the greens are contoured and slightly raised so that they can be clearly seen, besides making for interesting and challenging putting problems. The turf is Pencross Bent, ensuring a superb putting surface; the aprons and tees are Merion Blue and a little Kentucky Blue. Merion is ideal for tees and aprons where you get a tremendous amount of play. It's a very tough strain and can stand up to wear

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Reminiscent of the days of Nantucket whalers is the Blue Rock dining room Captains' chairs.

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and tear better than most other kinds of grass.

The golf course plus the practice area covers approximately 45 acres, with the course itself occupying about 32 acres. This seems to be the acreage required for a full-length par-3 18-holer. In contrast, a regulation course averages between 110 and 160 acres, so Blue Rock is about one-third the overall size of a full-length course. In length, a standard course averages about 6,300 yards, Blue Rock measures 2,803 yards, so it rates as a long par-3 course.

The Davenport concentrated on building an attractive course before adding all the frills. It's the course, not the other facilities, they feel, that chiefly draws the people.

There is always an air of uncertainty as to the success of a business venture. But from the very start, the Davenport felt they had a winner. Golf unquestionably is on a continuous upswing. For many retired folks, Blue Rock offers an opportunity to become active in a sport for which they had little time before. Also, there is the wonderful opposite sex. Although not too seriously considered at first, the girls now make up at least 50 per cent of a season's total play. Lastly, the par-3 course encourages novices of both sexes, whereas the regulation-length 6,500-yard tracks frighten the day-

lights out of a tyro golfer.

The charm then of this par-3 golf course is that *anyone* can enjoy a round of golf.

Also you can play 18 holes in about two hours and still be in shape for the beach with the family. For example: Tee it up at 9 a.m. and be on the beach at noon, not even breathing hard. Another encouraging feature of par-3 golf is the abundance of husband-wife participation. When the better half is a beginner she doesn't have to be a drag

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"Little things mean a lot." Mementos on Blue Rock's fireplace of all the holes-in-one.

to the breadwinner on his day of golf; the holes are short enough so that whether it's her first time or 10th, Dad can still enjoy himself and not spend the day in the woods looking for the lady's golf ball—a common occurrence on a regulation course.

Well, it's one thing to have a great product, but it's still another to get people interested. Blue Rock, unquestionably a good product, still needed to be promoted.

The first year, Pete Davenport employed the services of all communications media. Short blurbs appeared in local newspapers and magazines and on local T.V. and radio. He invited Dave Marr (current PGA champ) and Patty Berg to give a teaching clinic and exhibition.

"Patty," said Pete Davenport, "is as great an entertainer as she is a player. She helped us tremendously, and I strongly urge anyone interested in kicking off their first day to invite someone like Patty."

Marr, also a charmer, established a course record of 51, which stood for more than a year.

Patty Berg was quoted as saying that it was the best par-3 she had ever seen.

In October of the first year one section of the Annual Indian Summer Golf

Tournament was held there. It's played over four different courses and although skeptical of Blue Rock at first, the pros had the time of their lives. Now it's a regular one-day stop in the tourney, held in October every year.

"The little course is not so little," said Pete Davenport. "Over 20,000 rounds were played on it before anyone matched the par of 54.

"The results of a few promotional ideas and the fine playing conditions for such a new course led to a very favorable first year," remarked Pete.

From the first day the course was heavily played. The increase in play the second year over the first was at least 60 per cent. In the last two years the rise has not been so marked, but it's becoming increasingly difficult to accommodate all the people who want to play the course. The average daily play is approximately 180 registrants.

"We figure capacity is about 260 players," said Pete, "and many times we exceed that figure."

Since Blue Rock is located in an area where golf is played practically all year long, (in this part of New England snow doesn't last long), the off-season green fees are reasonable.

It looks as though the par-3 courses are here to stay. Let's hope so. They seem like a good deal of fun. •



The Blue Rock pro shop, left, is one of Cape Cod's best. Karl Warnick, right, golf pro, keeps it well-stocked. A three-par of this kind requires a complete shop. Beautiful, but demanding ninth (facing page), is one of the sportier holes.