

PAR-3

Continued from previous page

which is not lighted, are much better than the greens on the lighted front side.

The biggest evening play comes approximately 1½ hours before the official sunset. By 10 o'clock, providing the temperature is less than 50 degrees, it's almost over for the night. That's why I believe it's necessary to light only the last three, maybe four, holes. This will give the course an extra hour or so of play. This even applies to regulation size courses. Few people come out at 10 o'clock and decide they want to play a round—and they usually are problem players.

Many of our golfers will play the unlighted back nine first and then move over to the lighted front nine. Many nights, around 8 o'clock, there will be 80 to 90 people stacked up on the tees, waiting for a chance to play. And play doesn't move as fast as you'd like. It takes a foursome 10 to 12 minutes to play each hole, instead of the usual 7 minutes, by the time each golfer takes four and five strokes—or more.

The pro shop at Parkbrook has been an important segment of the business. In five years, it has grown from \$175 a year to almost \$10,000, with an ample supply of high quality equipment.

Parkbrook sells many of the name brands of balls and clubs. The beginners start with rental clubs—a real necessity—we have over 30 sets and on a busy day we run out more than once. One in four gets the bug and purchases a starter set. With each set, the purchaser is assured that he will be given a trade-in on the first set if he comes back and buys a better set. It is surprising how many people do come back and eventually work up to the high-priced professional line.

Our shop sells approximately 9,000 golf balls a year. This includes the finest to the "jar" balls, those with cuts, etc., that are fished out of the two lakes. Last year alone, 16,000 balls were taken out of the lakes. They are repainted and sold five for \$1. There never are enough to go around.

For the beginners, we suggest one

good ball to putt with and the others to smack around. If they lose one of the "jar" balls, they haven't lost much. Besides, a high-priced ball with a cut or two still flies much better than a cheap, low compression ball.

It becomes sort of a game here. The people kid each other about "how many balls did you lose?" One fellow knocked

Continued on page 26

Fast-buck operators may hurt the game of golf

My overall attitude on Par-3's is perhaps a little on the discouraging side, not that our business is bad (by the way my wife, Louise, who is club manager at Parkbrook, is one of those great, but unsung heroines of the golf business), but because I really feel that Par-3's have taken over the place that Miniature Golf held 30 years ago. By this I mean that years ago 10 or 15 thousand dollars could be easily obtained and put into a miniature for a quick return with little or no concern as to whether this would be good for golf or not. Today, I think, with money being easier to come by, that a great many people want "on the band wagon" and are willing to invest 100 or 150 thousand dollars with the same thought—quick and easy profits—get in on the harvest and publicity that golf is generating through the Tour. To **** with the good of golf, the gentleman's game, the upbringing of juniors, etc. Most of these fast-buck operators will eventually go broke, particularly when they find that the fast profits are just not to be had without proper capitalization and especially proper planning. They usually do not play golf themselves and can see no reason for a PGA professional, and just use a ticket taker, and very seldom hire a qualified superintendent. This could—and I admit that it is unbelievable at this time—start a general downswing for the entire golf industry. Naturally, my views do not include any well planned, well run Par-3's such as the ones at Augusta, Miami or some of those in California and a few other places.