

# The golf car of tomorrow

*The radical advance  
from today's plush  
models will be the  
adoption of the  
air-cushion principle.*

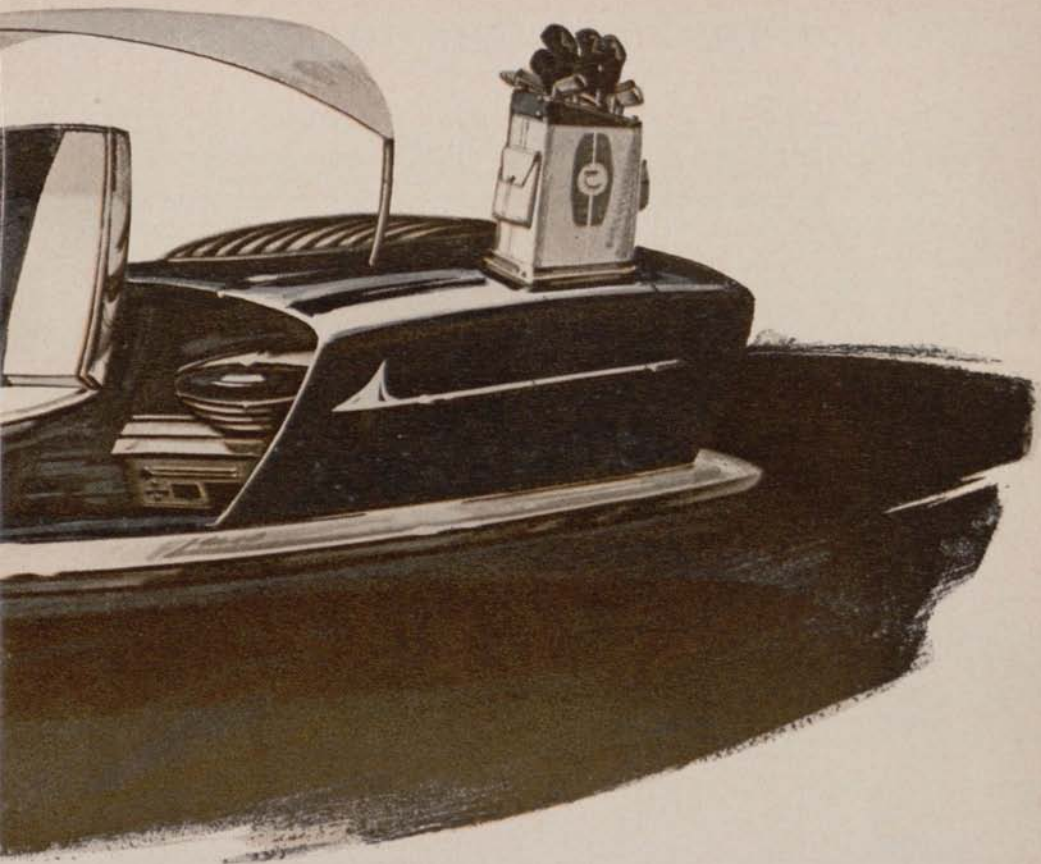
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It sits there hovering over the ground. It is suspended in the air like a helicopter, but there are no wings. It scurries along close to the grass like an automobile, but there are no wheels. It has a retractable bubble top so that the driver can ride in air-conditioning during the summer and warmth during the winter. In the cabin area, there is a television set, and also a bar and a telephone. It is a single-seater. The design is rounded and plastic and arcane like a flying saucer. This is the golf car of the future.

From the early 1950's, when the first golf cars were created out of remodeled Army jeeps and used on the flat, hard Texas courses, until today, when there are over 120,000 cars in operation, the manufacturers have dealt with three basic problems: safety, comfort and utility. The golf car business has profited from the golf boom of the last decade, but in many ways, it has helped to propagate that same boom. The golf car allows more people to play the game, especially women and senior golfers, and also helps to speed up play. The growth of the industry has ridden along hand in hand with the proliferation of resorts centered around and created for golf courses. One leader of the industry says that "a fleet of golf cars is one of the most reliable sources of income a golf course can have," and the Florida clubs have proved this to be an economic fact.

Up until now, the golf car designers have operated like Volkswagen —



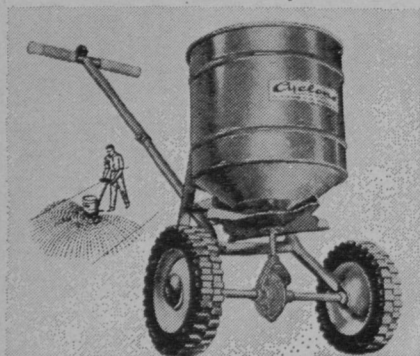
style changes have been rare, with most of the innovations taking place internally. The immediate future does not look radically different, but certain factors point toward a completely new design in the hazy time some 30 or 40 years from today.

Safety has suddenly become an issue. Ralph Nader's attack on the automobile industry has made the golf car manufacturers conscious of the need to make their vehicles as safe as possible. Most injuries that happen in golf cars are usually the result of driver carelessness and unfamiliarity with the machine, but designers may eventually move to the wheel-less car whose ride will be smooth and safe on even the roughest terrain. The golf car of the future will not be faster than the present speed of 12-15 miles-per-hour, but as every golfer knows, "there are no sand traps in the air," and very few bumps or rocks either.

The future car will also be oriented to comfort and the golfer of 2000 A.D. will be spoiled even more than he is now. Suspension systems have improved with each new marketing of cars, and air propulsion will feather the ride even more. The air-conditioning units will probably be optional, because many golfers would not want to step from a chilly car into a sweltering summer day. But with a bar and television set, every golfer will be a Jackie Gleason. The telephone will probably mean the golf courses will become even a bigger place for business than it is now. And the poor doctors will be forever on call.

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## GOLF CAR OF TOMORROW

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Best of all, the futuristic car will save wear and tear on the turf. The new wide tires that the manufacturers have developed have gone a long way to save the grass of the trampled busy courses, but nothing will be able to compare with the car that floats over, and not on, the fairways. But the driver won't be able to drive over a sand trap without creating a small sand storm. The advent of the single seater car will speed play, as each golfer can drive directly to his ball, and clubs will like the increased revenue.

There are more than 9 million golfers in the United States today, with 500,000 new players expected to take up the game this season. With more golfers, there will inevitably be more golf cars, and the new cars will be smaller, easier to maintain, with a wider range and more freedom of design. They will be more safe, more comfortable and better for courses. •

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