

Make your fleet pay off

With costs rising each year, the club must take a new look at its original investment as well as parts and services.

by Frank Olivieri

Whether yours is a municipal, daily fee, or private club, the cost of operation is mounting rapidly each year. While your most promising source of revenue can be your golf car, this will only be true if your fleet pays off from the day of purchase or lease to the day of resale or termination of lease.

First, here are two basic factors that must be considered in selecting the proper golf car—investment, and parts and service.

Your investment, whether you purchase or lease, is extremely important. Although the immediate reaction to the word "investment" is how much is it going to cost me, you must realize it should mean much more than simply the dollar. You have to consider:

1) Investment in the vehicle—for your dollar you must get quality that will give your cars longer life, more rounds per car, increased usage, increased revenue and fewer breakdowns.

2) Investment in the manufacturer—in selecting your golf car, be careful to evaluate the manufacturer. Does the company have the know-how to manufacture a quality vehicle? Can it adapt to changing needs for the golf car?

The second point to consider is your parts and service, which in reality is your local dealer. You should *physically* see that he has a reliable place of business. Also, ascertain that he has the equipment, trucks and mechanics to service golf cars, and carries an adequate supply of parts.

After you have selected the proper car for your course, you must determine the proper number.

If your club has had previous experience in golf cars, the proper

number should not be too difficult to ascertain. In the climates that allow 5-7 months usage of cars, your cars should average at a minimum of at least 100 rounds per car. If they are averaging less than 100 rounds, you definitely have too many cars. Once you have obtained approximately 125-130 rounds per car, it is recommended you add more cars to your fleet.

In the year-round golf areas, your fleet should average a minimum of 150 rounds per car. When you have obtained 175-180 rounds per car, more cars should be added.

For both year round or season play, this rule of thumb should apply for lease or purchase.

Another method for determining the number of cars is as follows. All of your cars should be out 1-1/2 times on Saturday and Sunday. All of the cars should go out on one

day during the week when your play is heavy, and the other days used 70 per cent of the time.

If your club has 20 cars, the following is approximately what the usage will be: Saturday, 30 cars; Sunday, 30 cars; Monday, 14 cars (if course is open); Tuesday, 14 cars; Wednesday, 20 cars (usually a good business day); Thursday, 14 cars and Friday, 14 cars.

Usually you find that as the week progresses the usage is better. For example: on Monday you will not normally use 14 cars, but come Friday you may be using 19 or 20 cars. Your average during the week days, however, should be a total of 70 per cent usage.

Regardless of which method is used, you must remember you will and must run out of cars on heavy playing days. If you attempted to accommodate all who desire

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Above, Westinghouse's Marketeer 434 electric golf car with Electro-Flo speed control. It features oversize pneumatic tires that make for smoother riding.

a car, your fleet will not pay off and you just have too many cars.

Now that you have selected your car and the proper number for your course, there are certain points to follow in making your fleet pay off.

DISPLAY AND MERCHANDISING

Golf cars, like any other merchandise, will not sell themselves. It is, therefore, vital to display and promote them to the member:

- Have cars lined up at the first tee. Make it almost impossible for the player to approach the first tee without passing around and through your cars.
- At the sign-up area, display signs advertising your cars. Also, have the attendant ask each and every golfer if he desires to rent a car.
- Automatically place all players' golf clubs on cars. They will be reluctant to have them removed.

SPECIAL RATE DAYS

To help promote your cars, you can provide special rate days. However, many clubs do not feel that at any time should the rates be reduced. Thus each and every club should decide for itself.

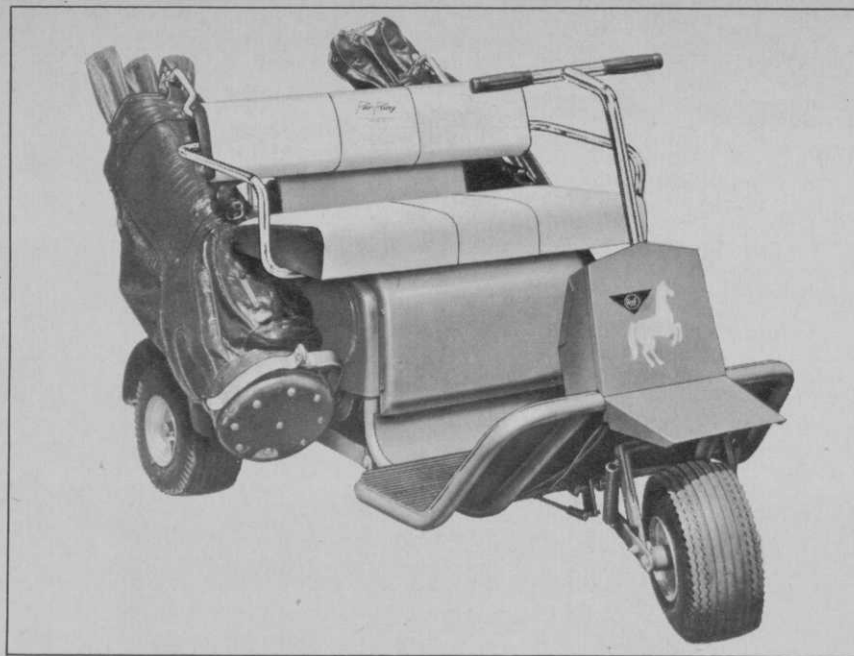
If you wish to provide special rates, some or all of the following may be used: reduced rates on ladies day, reduced rates for twilight golf and reduced rates for league play.

If your club has more than one course, you may set aside one course so that all who play must ride. You might try this as an experiment one or two days a week.

MAINTENANCE AND APPEARANCE

Proper maintenance and appearance will add greatly to making your fleet pay off:

1. Good appearance provides an incentive for usage—every car should be washed daily, seats cleaned, and all papers and wrappings removed.
2. Keep the external appearance of car in good physical condition. Make sure it is clean and all dents and holes repaired. It



Above, AMF's Par Pony gasoline golf car. It has front and rear spring suspension, a safety brake and a single pedal for accelerator and brake.

- is a proven point that a golf car with good appearance will increase usage—and the players tend to respect the vehicles.
3. Provide weekly preventive maintenance. A player becomes very disgruntled and unhappy if the car does not complete 18 holes. If this happens frequently, usage will definitely drop. With present-day cars, most breakdowns are due to improper maintenance.

RECORDS AND SCHEDULING

Correct record keeping is as vital to the upkeep of your fleet as maintenance. Some of the following points will help to make your fleet yield more revenue:

- a) All cars should be operated the same number of rounds.
- b) A regular rotation system should be established. This is an important factor in helping determine the life of batteries or overhauls to the gasoline engine.
- c) On heavy play days, make certain that the best cars are used first so they may be turned around for another 18 holes if necessary. Too often cars are selected at random and when needed again in the same day, fail to make the required number of plays.

- d) Keep accurate cost and revenue figures. A troublesome car might have to be completely rebuilt. While the cost might be great, the revenue might warrant such action.

When it is time to trade in your fleet, the value of your car will have a great bearing on making your fleet pay off. If your car has been maintained properly, internally and externally, you can expect \$75 to \$100 more trade-in allowance. This figure is a very realistic one and could be a determining factor in your desire to upgrade your fleets. We cannot stress too strongly the importance of proper maintenance.

The ideal trade-in program would be a "four-year turn over." Let us assume that a course purchased 60 cars. At the end of the first year, no cars would be traded and the fleet would be intact. At the end of the second year, 20 cars would be traded; from then on 20 cars would be traded each year. Thus at the end of the fourth year, all 60 cars would have been traded in from the original fleet.

Summarizing, each and every one of these foregoing points should not be neglected, however small they may seem to appear. Let one phase be omitted, and it can affect your entire fleet operation. □