

The saga continues for Mosholu Golf Course, the tiny nine-hole municipal track based in the gritty Bronx. About a year ago in *Golfdom*, I reported that Mosholu, which had been on the decline for several years, made a remarkable comeback under the auspices of New York's finest — from the golf industry, that is.

In 2001, the Metropolitan Golf Association Foundation and Metropolitan Section of the PGA took over Mosholu's operation when it became the first course in the New York area to become a member of the First Tee program, which was formed in 1997 to provide affordable golf to kids and others. The First Tee gave Mosholu, which opened in 1914, a new lease on life. Because of the program, scores of underprivileged kids from the Bronx now come to Mosholu to learn and play golf. And because Mosholu was named a First Tee facility, it received ample financial support from various groups and companies like the USGA Foundation, PGA Foundation, TourTurf, Nike Golf and others to spruce up the course and build a learning center to teach new players.

It was a wonderful story for golf, especially when you consider that Mosholu is hardly posh and is the definitive course for the Everyman. These days, since golf is continually perceived as a sport for the well-heeled, the game needs more stories like Mosholu. The humble course, with its bargain green fees, helps take the word "rich" out of the stereotype that labels golf a "rich person's game."

Unfortunately, in the midst of Mosholu's comeback, the golf course was thrown a wicked curve ball last summer by New York's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Mosholu was told that its 3,100-yard course will probably be the site for a new water-filtration plant. The good news is the plant, which will take eight to 10 years to build, will be located underground. The bad news is that Mosholu would lose its driving range, its clubhouse and basically operate a makeshift course while the plant is built. This will hurt the course's already delicate business.

Needless to say, Barry McLaughlin, Mosholu's executive director, is concerned about Mosholu's future. McLaughlin is hoping — but

Bronx Golf Course Deserves Good Fate

BY LARRY AYLWARD



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he knows how fickle political groups can be — that the DEP follows through on its promise to give money to Mosholu to help the course renovate even more than it already has in exchange for providing the site for the water-filtration plant.

"I'm happy to think that we'll have something as good as anything being built today — if everything comes true," McLaughlin says.

McLaughlin understands why the plant has to be built. It's a huge project for the city and its citizens, and it makes perfect sense to build the plant on the golf course because of its proximity to a main water tunnel, not to mention the fact that Mosholu is located on municipal land.

"Hopefully, the disruption with the water plant will be just a hiccup, and eventually we'll have something really special here," McLaughlin says.

Hopefully, indeed. But McLaughlin shouldn't settle for less. He and his staff, including superintendent Erik Feldman, have worked hard to revamp the course, which was unsightly with overgrown tree branches and crabgrass-infested greens and fairways before they arrived. They deserve the best fate.

There's no doubt the water-filtration plant is important to the city's operation. It's more important than a golf course.

But it's also important the DEP follow through on its commitment to upgrade Mosholu, which is also more than just a golf course. For years, Mosholu has been a mainstay in the Bronx. It's a destination of sport and entertainment for the melting pot of people who live in the bustling borough. It's a jewel in the community.

Mosholu should not become a victim of circumstance.

Editor Larry Aylward can be reached at 440-891-2770 or laylward@advanstar.com.