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9-Hole Course Brings Larger Return Than 18

"From the standpoint of investment and return, it is more profitable to own a nine-hole semi-private course than an 18-hole layout."

This startling statement was made by Herbert H. Davis, Jr., owner of nine- and 18-hole fee courses in Omaha, when he appeared on the panel of a public course seminar which Rex McMorris, former executive director of the National Golf Foundation, conducted in conjunction with the recent GCSA convention in Cleveland.

Davis cited comparative figures of his two courses — Cedar Hills (nine holes) and Miracle Hills (18 holes) in contending that it is more profitable to invest in the shorter layout. In 1963, he pointed out, Cedar Hills showed a 37 per cent return on the investment in property, while the longer Miracle Hills layout produced only a 13 per cent return.

Strong Nine-Hole Play

To further bolster his argument, Davis said that studies made by his investment corporation, which owns the two courses, show that nearly 50 per cent of play at the 18-hole Miracle Hills club in 1963 was made up of only nine-hole rounds. Heavy weekend and holiday 18-hole play, however, cut into the weekday nine-hole play which actually averaged 57 per cent. Davis added that it is doubtful if more than five per cent of the players at the 9-hole Cedar Hills course play two rounds there in a single day.

In 1963, green fee revenue at the shorter Cedar Hills course exceeded that at Miracle Hills on a per-hole basis by nearly three per cent. Yet, investment at Cedar Hills, according to the Omaha owner's

figures, is only about 40 per cent per-hole of what it is at Miracle Hills. It costs only two-thirds as much at the smaller course to maintain a single hole in comparison with Miracle Hills. Land occupancy at the nine-hole layout is only 43 per cent of what it is at the longer course. This, too, is figured on a per-hole basis.

Common Basis for Comparisons

Davis told the more than 300 persons who attended the seminar that for comparative purposes, all figures for both courses were reduced to a common basis. Interest and principal payment charges were eliminated for the sake of comparison, and returns were figured on the cost of facilities. Rent was substituted for land costs of both properties to put the comparison here on an equitable basis.

At the conclusion of the 1963 season, Davis said that his company was so confident of the demand at Cedar Hills that it raised fees there by approximately 15 per cent. Fees at Miracle Hills, however, remained the same. Cedar Hills covers about 30 acres, plays to about 2,500 yards and has a par of 32. Miracle Hills covers 130 acres, has considerably larger greens than Cedar and can be easily shortened or stretched by tee adjustments. Par is 70. Davis conceded that from an artistic and golfing standpoint, Miracle Hills has an edge over Cedar. But he added that most people who make investments in semi-private courses aren't looking at art as intensely as they are at money. His company is presently building a third course in Omaha — a nine-hole layout, as you might guess.

Four Other Speakers

Other speakers on the panel at the public course seminar were Joseph M. Duich, Penn State University agronomist; William Galligan, representing the Village of Glen Ellyn, Ill.; R. E. Watson of Benjamin Lewis & Co., Chicago; and Bill Lyons, owner of a public course in Canal Fulton, O.

The speech given by Joe Duich was based on the work that H. B. Musser, J. C. Harper and he have put into the drawing up of specifications for course construction in the last four or five years.

In dealing with an architect, Duich stressed that a prospective course owner

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should not only get design drawings that are complete to the last detail, but should insist on directives that outline how the entire course building project is to be carried out. Usually, he said, no trouble is encountered so far as the designs are concerned, but in many instances some architects will hedge in detailing how each construction operation is going to be performed.

Architect Responsible

Supervision of construction, the Penn State agronomist, told his audience is the obligation of the architect. The charge is often made, he said, and has been partly substantiated, that architects, or qualified representative appointed by them, don't visit course sites frequently enough to check on the progress of construction. Duich said that the person building a course should insist on some kind of a daily inspection and, if necessary, should hire his own representative, preferably a supt., to handle this.

Finally, he said that in many cases deviations from original plans have to be made because of soil conditions at a course site. Terrain problems and unforeseen obstacles also may be encountered. Reasonable allowance should be made for these things before construction is started since it is extremely rare when some bottlenecks don't eventually crop up.

Acceptance Is Slow

William Gallagan, village administrator of Glen Ellyn, Ill., said that it takes an almost unbelievable amount of groundwork to prepare a community to accept a public golf course if it doesn't have one. Opposition is quite difficult to overcome because most people don't realize that a municipally operated course usually starts paying its way in a short time. This is the story that always has to be emphasized.

In Glen Ellyn, it was first necessary to have the voters approve a referendum to set up a city recreation district. With this out of the way, the task of publicizing the need for a course was made a little easier for the city officials and civic and fraternal groups that supported its construction. But before the publicity campaign got underway, Gallagan and others behind the Glen Ellyn campaign armed themselves

with extensive surveys of golf operations and revenues in other towns and villages of comparable size. This was done, he pointed out, because it is well established that when a recreation issue is to be presented to the voters, more questions are asked concerning it than any other type of municipal issue.

"Voters," said Gallagan, "understand the need for schools, municipal buildings and public utilities, but feel that recreational facilities are luxuries that can be deferred or put off completely. That is why it takes so much time and effort to sell them."

Discovers A New Law

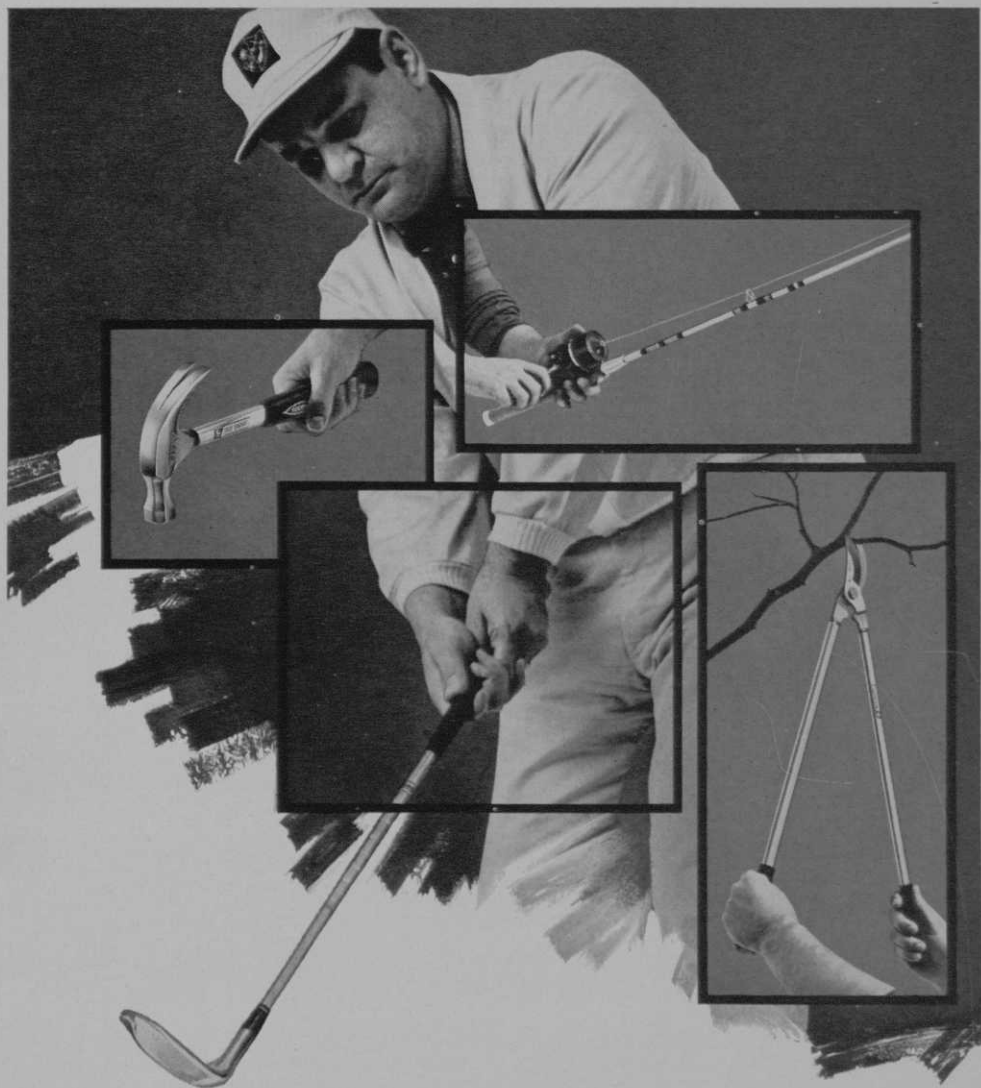
One of the best selling points that Gallagan discovered during the campaign: As the population of a community increases, more schools, sewers, streets, etc. are needed and taxes go up. But if a 150-acre golf course is built and perhaps a 200- or 300-acre park is approved, several hundred potential homesites are eliminated. This cuts down the need for adding to school and municipal facilities, thus saving the taxpayers money.

In discussing the financing of municipal courses, R. E. Watson of Benjamin Lewis & Co., a Chicago investment securities firm, said that before any bond issue is undertaken, recreation officials should carefully check their issuing authority to prevent any future complications. Then, preliminary architectural and engineering studies should be made so that the company that buys the bonds can be apprised of all facts covering the cost of building a proposed course. It is also wise, Watson said, for the recreation commission to make allowance for possible additional debt after the building project is started. It should also be prepared to submit estimates of potential play and revenue so that redemption schedules can be set up without delay.

Check Contractors' Responsibilities

In letting construction bids, Watson stressed that careful checks should be made of the successful bidders' financial responsibility and ability to do the work they have contracted to do. Performance bonds should be required of all companies that work on a course building project. A system of inspecting work in progress,

(Continued on page 116)



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Gary Nixon

... he discovered a sales pickup.

'House of Nixon' A Sales Lift in

A Closeout Special may have to get out from under a heavy found that a gimmick worked

When Gary Nixon made a break from The Greenbrier and Sam Snead early in 1964 following a 15-year association with the two as an associate pro, and moved to Philmont CC in Huntington Valley, Pa., his immediate impression was that he should have made the switch to a head shopmaster's spot long before he did.

It wasn't that Nixon had been working on a rockpile in White Sulphur Springs. Quite the contrary. But within a few weeks after coming to Philmont and getting the shop stocked, Gary luxuriated in a flurry of spring sales that made him wonder if he hadn't discovered a new conduit leading from the nearby Philadelphia mint. A large percentage of Philmont's near 1,500 members (about 800 of whom play golf) it seemed, did their early season buying in the pro shop, and with gusto.

Then It Tapered Off

Things like that, of course, don't go on forever. Within a few weeks after that initial burst, business became somewhat routine. By mid-June there was evidence that the summer doldrums at Philmont were going to be just as real as they are at almost any other club.

Nixon, who doesn't favor closeouts, sales or similar distress measures if they can

Label Produces the Slack Season

helped Gary Nixon of Philmont inventory last summer, but he better in easing the situation

be avoided, huddled with his assistants, Buzz Garvin and Sam Baker, sometime around the fourth of July. "We need a gimmick," he told them. "Something besides a sale on which we won't make any money. We have to come up with some kind of a cute idea that will make people buy more golf goods from us."

The rack-room conference went on for a couple hours. Gary, Buzz and Sam put on the worried looks that denote deep



Buzz Garvin, assistant pro at Philmont, is seen with club display that is cleverly targeted with aid of a golf cap and head covers.

thinking. Finally, someone, it isn't clear who, said, "How about labeling our merchandise 'House of Nixon'? It might get some of the customers around here fired up."

Tested on Members

Everyone agreed that a label such as this was worth a try. Mrs. Leon Rose, a Philmont member with an artistic touch who had been doing some poster work for Nixon for lockerrooms and lounge displays, drew up some tentative 'House of Nixon' labels. They were tested on a handful of members who decided that a simple, Gothic Italic lettered sample had the most eye appeal of those submitted. Shortly thereafter, signs bearing the legend, "House of Nixon Presents," were seen around the clubhouse. In the meantime, the Philmont pro arranged to have the labels attached to the sport shirts and sweaters that he ordered, along with having them imprinted on the plastic bags in which the sportswear was packaged. This year, he is expanding the idea to



Practice green, just outside Pro shop front door, is located in clubhouse offset. Directly behind it is the main dining room.



Dressing nook and sportswear display were installed in Philmont shop at the cost of only \$100.

take in as many items as can be conveniently labeled.

What was the reaction among the members of the Philadelphia club? It was good, if not smashing. Women, who account for nearly 70 per cent of the buying at Philmont, were impressed. Male members agreed that the label idea added class to the shop's method of presenting its merchandise.

Better Late Than Not at All

As for Gary Nixon, he says that the idea probably was introduced too late in the season to be fully exploited. "But it was a fine sales pickup," he points out. "August sales would have been a lot lower than they were if we hadn't had the label. It got people to talking about us, taking new notice of the pro shop. I'm sure that over a full season a simple gimmick such as the 'House of Nixon' label will make a big difference in our volume."

Since Nixon depends on 250 women players to provide more than two-thirds of his volume, he follows the lines of least resistance by playing up to the ladies. Shortly after he arrived on the Philmont scene last year, Gary staged a fashion show and luncheon for the feminine swingers.

He is convinced that there could have been a no more proper introduction because the entire club responded by nearly buying out his initial stock in its spring spending surge.

Fall Style Show

The Philmont pro didn't allow the women's interest to wane thereafter. Early in September, at a time when the ladies were showing signs of turning their backs on golf for the season, Nixon staged a Pro-Lady tournament that did much to renew enthusiasm. Then, a month later, he came back with a second fashion show and cocktail party that gave impetus to the sale of fall merchandise. So, that you don't get the impression that men are neglected at Philmont, they, too, were invited to the fall showing.

One of the first things Nixon did after coming to the Huntington Valley club was to borrow space from the sales room and build a dressing cubicle for the women at one end of the shop. It is finished in Philippine mahogany and is fronted by



Gary Nixon recommends "full house" look when it comes to displaying merchandise. Mirrors above small drawers in which golf gloves are stocked give illusion that shop is more fully stocked than it actually is.



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says **MIDGE COVA**, Owner-Professional
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racks and shelves on which shorts, slacks and shirts are displayed. It cost Nixon only \$100 to provide this convenience for the women who are spared a long trip to the lockerroom to try on clothing they may be interested in buying.

Playing up to the feminine trade and making extensive use of the newly discovered labels aren't the only sales devices that Nixon employs. The posters that Mrs. Rose draws for him do more than merely call attention to the pro shop. In most cases they carry a message. The members are informed through them of the latest styles that can be seen in the shop, or they may list some of the new merchandise that has been received. They are also used to advertise special sales.

These things are fine adjuncts to making pro shop sales, Nixon says, but what really spells success in a shop operation is carrying a complete inventory from the beginning of the season until the end. It may be a throwback to the many years that Gary spent at a resort club, but he contends that nothing sells merchandise like having it displayed. He is in complete accord with Pat Mahoney, the Palo Alto, Calif. pro, who believes in returning part of his profits to the business in order to expand the stock.

"If you don't keep up your inventory toward the end of the season," Nixon says, "you should at least try to give the impression that you do. Bare spots on the shelves look twice as vacant to the customer as they do to you. He thinks you are folding up for the season when he sees them. A good merchandiser will keep enough balls, socks, head covers, caps, etc. on hand to fill them in. He can always get rid of this merchandise."

The Philmont accounting office handles the pro shop billing and accounting and Nixon hires an auditor to periodically check his books. Yet, every Sunday evening he prepares an income statement and balances it against a tentative expense statement. His reasoning is that the pro who waits for the club accounting department or his auditor to give him a periodic profit and loss summary is out of touch with his business. He should know from week to week, if not to the last dollar, the approximate condition of his business.

Color Instructional Golf Film Available

A full-color instructional film, *Winning Golf*, has been released by the National Collegiate Film Service, 1030 W. Chicago Ave., Chicago, Ill. The movie presents the teaching techniques of Robert H. (Bob) Kepler, coach of the Ohio State's golf team and chairman of the NCAA golf tournament committee.

Included in illustrating the proper golf form are two of Kepler's former NCAA



Bob Kepler, Ohio State golf coach, Jack Nicklaus and William J. Ganz, producer of *Winning Golf*, discuss National Collegiate golf movie.

champions, Tom Nieporte and Jack Nicklaus. A two-time NCAA champion who presents the do's and don'ts in the 35-minute MacGregor-sponsored film is Dick Crawford, who captured the collegiate title in 1959 and repeated in 1960. Kepler also called upon present varsity stars and recent Buckeye alumni such as Mike Podolsky and Tom Weiskopf to help in making the movie.

Chris Schenkel, TV golf announcer, narrates the film showing the Kepler analytical techniques. They include the grip and stance right on through the various fundamentals of the swing.

Winning Golf includes a substantial amount of slow motion to enable viewers to grasp every movement of the swing. Trouble shots, such as sand trap play — both from buried and set-up lies — right through sidehill, downhill and uphill lies are also shown.