Detroit area, using leasehold agreements with private developers in Ann Arbor and Fort Wayne. The developers will operate the course under graduated rent schedules, based on a percentage of the gross income, including green fees, cart rentals, and restaurant revenues. About 45,000 rounds of golf are played on Detroit municipal courses annually (just about the national average for municipal facilities). Green fees for 18 holes are $5 on weekdays and $6 on weekends.

"With that kind of play," Amick noted, "It certainly appears that the developers and municipalities will benefit from construction of the new courses."

Other leasehold projects are under construction or on the drawing boards in Burlingame and Melpistas, Calif., and explorratory discussions are in progress in several other California communities.

Southern California's San Bernardino County hosts the 36-hole El Prado golf facility, developed under leasehold agreement by a limited partnership headed by a retired dentist. Stock was sold in $2,500 units, and the courses then built at a cost of $3 million. It has been calculated that the developers will enjoy a return of 13.1 percent by year 10 of the 50-year lease.

Clearwater Golf Park in Florida has operated under a lease from the city since 1971; its 18-hole executive course attraacts an average of 90,000 rounds annually.

"Well-planned golf courses can serve as the cornerstone of successful park operations," Amick said, "generating revenues to support themselves, as well as other park facilities. Ample playing facilities will also propagate the game's popularity for years to come."

A story in numbers

Further proof of the size of the municipal market in the golf business lies in the statistical results of the Profile of the Industry survey done by GOLF BUSINESS earlier this year.

Our results showed that despite the comparatively small number of municipal courses, they represent some big figures. For example, municipal lead the league in rounds played per facility in 1976 with 44,700 — almost twice that of private (23,800), substantially higher than the national average for all courses (25,800), and even greater than daily fee (42,100).

Interestingly, although green fees at municipal courses (about $2.75 for nine holes and $4.00 for eighteen, on the average) were the lowest of the various types of facilities, almost 60 percent of the municipal facilities said they had not raised their rates in the past year. Although this is probably good from the golfers' viewpoint, it may not be so good for the courses — as Cincinnati's Gene Burress points out in his article this month (see page 22).

Municipal courses did report substantial income from golf car rentals in 1976, an average of $33,800 per facility. Survey returns showed that actually more municipal facilities (88.9 percent of them) have golf cars to rent than daily fee (85.3 percent) or private courses (78.2 percent). At 65 percent of the municipal courses renting cars, the pro operates the concession; he collects the profits at half of them — quite a different story from that of daily fee and private courses. At private clubs, the pros operate half of the golf car concessions and collect the profits at little more than a quarter of them. They fare even worse at daily fee operations, however, operating the concession at just 21 percent of the courses and collecting the profits at only 9 percent.

Maintenance not neglected

Although it is a popular conception that municipal courses are not maintained as well as their private and privately owned competition, the figures would seem to prove otherwise.

First of all, municipal golf facilities last year had larger operating budgets, on the average, than daily fee courses — although nowhere near as big as private clubs. The private clubs averaged revenues of $334,200 and expenditures of $267,600 — followed by municipal facilities at $193,900 in revenues and $171,200 in expenditures — followed by daily fee courses with $128,400 coming in and $120,200 going out. Municipal facilities also reported spending a greater dollar amount on maintenance than did daily fee and private courses.

The most telling statistic, however, is probably that of maintenance considered as a percentage of total expenditures reported. Here municipal operations led the pack, with course maintenance accounting for 65 percent of facility expenditures. This figure is double the percentage spent on course maintenance by other types of facilities: daily fee courses reported 31 percent of their expenditures as maintenance; and private clubs, 28 percent.

Daily fee golf operations often

have more amenities in the way of a pro shop and foodservice than do municipal facilities, and private clubs normally have a good-size clubhouse to maintain (and may include locker and shower rooms, saunas and steambaths, tennis courts, and a swimming pool) — which would account for a greater amount of their expenditures.

But the biggest reason municipal facilities spend more on course maintenance is probably because they simply have to. They get more play, and the players are often more careless and less accomplished than those golfing on other courses.

Such players do, however, have a right to play and deserve a place to learn and develop their golf game. That is perhaps the fundamental role of municipal golf courses: to provide facilities for those golfers who do not have the skill or the money to play elsewhere. Municipal courses can and should play an important role in developing junior golf as well, by providing public facilities for young golfers and by serving as the arena for school golf programs.

No one begins as a scratch golfer; everyone should have a place to improve his game without being embarrassed or disparaged while doing it. We cannot afford to discourage any potential golfer. □

GOVERNMENTAL GOLF

Time to stop giving it away

by Gene Burress, CGCS

There are several categories of governmental operated golf courses, which could be referred to as city, town, township, county, state, and federal. The common complaint taxpayers hear from all of these forms of government is the "money crunch," and a very large percentage of government-operated golf courses do operate "in the red." The unsatisfactory conditions expressed in the April issue of GOLF BUSINESS concerning the City of San Francisco municipal golf courses are not unusual. The success of the City of Cincinnati golf program (GOLFDOM, June 1974) has resulted in many inquiries to that city concerning their unique City Ordinance. The question most often raised is this: "How long can government-operated golf courses be permitted to give golf away and operate at a deficit at the expense of the nongolfing taxpayer?"

"At many courses, green fees are structured to a bygone era."

Basically, governmental golf courses have not kept pace with changes in the golf industry. Green fees have gone up in some cases to keep up with rising costs of maintaining the golf course, but elsewhere they have not, and either the taxpayer or the condition of the golf course has borne the burden. The failure of government golf courses has been in their organizational and management applications, especially funds management.

Golf is no longer referred to as the "rich man's game," but the public

As supervisor of golf for the Cincinnati (Ohio) Recreation Commission, Gene Burress oversees the operation of seven courses. He is a certified superintendent and a member of the GCSAA educational committee.

golfer is still a "second class citizen." The United States Golf Association has fostered this concept by decreeing that to belong to their organization as a full member, one must operate a private club. The Professional Golfer's Association and the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America are primarily oriented towards private clubs. Their orientation is somewhat more understandable than the USGA's, because there are many more private than public courses. However, the PGA and the GCSAA should devote many more of their programs to assisting public golf. Of our professional associations, the National Golf Foundation is doing the most for the management of public golf facilities.

Those that can, should

There are some fine public golf courses, in spite of the system under which they are supported, but governmental golf courses are not supporting themselves. Those that could, are not, because their funds are put back into the general fund to support other agencies.

There are others that could and are not because they give golf away. Their green fees are structured to a bygone era. There are segments of our society which could not play golf if they had to pay the going rate. In these cases, golf still cannot be given away, but fees can be structured to permit these golf ers the opportunity to play and they will know that they are doing their part to support their golf program.

To find a governmental golf course where the fee, management, and fund structure permit a 'self-sustaining' operation is a rarity. One of the biggest give away programs in governmental golf is the federal government's military golf program. Fees are ridiculously low to highly paid officers and senior enlisted personnel, and generally fees collected are returned to a nonappropriated fund which includes all aspects of recreation. Then the military golf course has to fight for — and normally loses — its needed share of the money. Course condition at many military locations has deteriorated. Some state and county golf courses find the golf fees supporting the park system at the expense and neglect of the golf course.

Senior citizens provide a real conundrum for golf course operators. Although they make up a good percentage of the municipal golfers and often are a course's most regular customers, they usually cannot afford to pay high green fees. Many municipalities offer a special rate for senior citizens, but author Burress suggests that it should not be less than 50 percent of the regular green fee.

The solution to this problem is to structure a concept whereby the golf program will produce a "self-sustaining" operation. Note, though, that this will probably mean a change in local law.

Half a million left over?!

The first 2 or 3 years may mean a lean or leaner budget, but in the future there is a very bright picture. This was the case in the City of Cincinnati. The first few years produced a barely break-even operation. Since it's inception the Cincinnati Golf Fund has been self-sustaining in a sense of the word — that is, considering certain "givens" such as real estate taxes and water. Under this concept, with several fee increases to keep stride with inflation and annual wage increases, the Cincinnati Golf Fund finished 1976 with over $500,000 in the reserve fund.

A healthy reserve fund is important to allow for contingencies, such as a year of bad golfing weather, causing reduced revenues. The golf reserve fund was used in 1977 to provide $70,000 to repave entrance roads and $412,000 to furnish new clubhouses. The Golf Fund supports two capital improvement bonds, one of $1 million and the other $1.5 million. A heavy bond debt service of $150,000 starts each year. Overhead expenses to support 51 annual employees in retirement contributions, hospital care, workmen's compensation, and a general fund charge for administrative supports bites heavily into the $1.9 million budget for 1977. With seven golf courses (126 holes), four driving ranges, and two miniature golf courses, budget cuts must be made to meet anticipated revenues. The capital improvement program is virtually complete and 1978 should produce a budget based on accurate predictions for revenues. With green fees, electric cars, and other rentals remaining at a reasonable level, less than most privately owned daily fee golf courses, this must be a sound operational and management system not permitting "free" or "semi-free" rides at the expense of the Golf Fund.

What sound premises must be developed to insure a self-supporting operation?

> All revenues must remain in a designated Golf Fund, with course management having responsibility for all aspects of its administration.

> A contract with a vendor or concessionaire can only be entered into when it is a solidly proven asset to the Golf Fund and at the same time fills the needs of the public golfer at the highest level obtainable. Pro shops, food concessions, golf cars, rental equipment, and lessons must be strictly profit-making business operations. Besides green fees, the golf car operations is the highest revenue producer, yet this is lost revenue in many opera-

tions. Pros or managers should be salaried, not receiving any percentage of rental equipment or fees.

> Fees are structured to a realistic level to permit a profit situation of reasonable level considering current year budget and past year's expenses. Certain fees may be reduced for senior citizens and youth, but to not less than 50 percent of the regular fee, and two-thirds or 75 percent of the regular fee is best. Annual fees or memberships should never be permitted.

> Minimum annual staff should form a solid nucleus which the seasonal part-time staff can complement. Job specifications, promotions, titles, and salaries should be structured to permit only the highest caliber of golf course maintenance personnel. Civil service and unions must be educated and "buy into" the changes that are required for a successful maintenance operation. Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action requirements can be met. Titles such as "greenskeepers" should be eliminated and replaced with "golf course superintendent" or "golf turf manager." This will improve image and stature among peers.

> Excellent turf management practices with knowledgeable and skilled supervisors have to be maintained. Standards of golf course maintenance must be comparable to that of the finest privately owned daily fee courses and most private courses. Traffic can be controlled and fine turf established and maintained. A well-manicured golf course free of debris and unsightly tall grass, with fresh cups and ballwashers, well-managed grass tees, neatly raked sand traps and good greens is expected. This is your greatest commodity and sells your facility above anything else.

> The latest state of the art in mechanized equipment is required to enable a fast, efficient maintenance crew to get on and off the golf course in minimum time. Establish tables of allowance for equipment, then purchase required equipment. A good preventive maintenance program for equipment, a comprehensive training program, and a responsive equipment repair system are imperative.

> Promotional golf clinics, private lessons, tournaments, special events, outings, and availability of public speakers to citizens groups are essential to attracting golfers. Development of a league program not alienating the walk-on golfer will form the heart of your play. Tee time reservation system should be fair and honest.

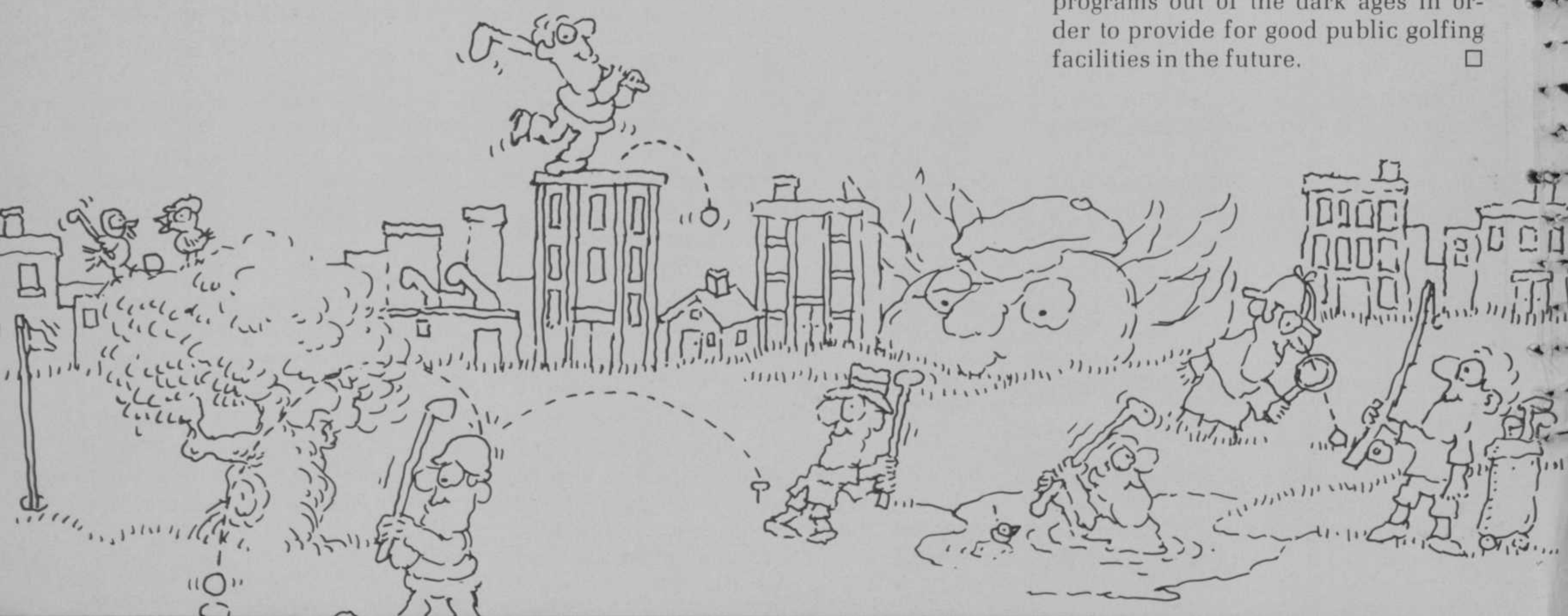
What of the future?

Governmental golf courses which do not provide the facilities and charge the "going rate" for green fees and rentals should be subjected to irate citizen golf groups. Pressure ought to be levied against governmental management and politicians for a change. On the other hand, those programs which give golf away on nonsupportive green fees, annual fees, or membership plans — thereby causing a deficit program — should be forced by the nongolfing taxpayer to correct this situation. Sure, the golfer enjoys these rates and for the most part will accept a poor or marginal golf course, but can he expect his nongolfing neighbor to pay the way?

"Can the golfer expect his nongolfing neighbor to pay the way?"

The lack of green-belt legislation in some States is spelling doom to many private clubs due to excessive real estate taxes. Couple taxes with inflation, and many private clubs are going bankrupt. Governmental golf courses can and have gone bankrupt. How long will the taxpayer underwrite a "giveaway" nonsupporting golf program? Without a separate and restrictive Golf Fund, the public golfer may see green fees rise to the point where golf is prohibitively costly, appearing once again as a "rich man's game." It can no longer be subsidized!

With a sound, revenue-producing golf program, municipalities should buy those private clubs which go bankrupt, as Cincinnati did in 1972-73. This preserves golf and dwindling green-belt areas. This concept needs to be brought to the attention of public golf administrators, influential citizen's golf organizations, and elected officials to bring governmental golf programs out of the dark ages in order to provide for good public golfing facilities in the future. □



Distinctive motor cars. They say a lot about your club.

And Harley-Davidson gas golf cars reflect both your interest in golfers—and in sound club management.

Like other exclusive cars, Harley-Davidson 3 and 4-wheel golf cars are beautifully engineered and built with care. They have a distinctive style and character all their own.

They also feature fine car suspension, positive braking (disk brakes of course) and effortless steering. And as you'd expect, the ride is stable and comfortable, pampering golfers and fairways alike.

Quiet? Whisper-quiet. Engine sound is barely audible. And it automatically shuts off the instant you step out to play. Nothing to disturb anybody's game.

What's more, once you fill the fuel tank, the Harley-Davidson is set to go for at least 16 rounds. A full 288 holes. Or more.

It's all here. Luxury car quality, quietness, reliability and expert dealer support. Plus the important options you expect from the leader. All sound reasons why Harley-Davidson gas golf cars are the best selling in the world.

And sound reasons why you should consider them for your club.

See your Harley-Davidson dealer now. He knows all about fine cars.

AMF Harley-Davidson
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201

Circle 119 on free information card

NGF studies distribution of public golf courses

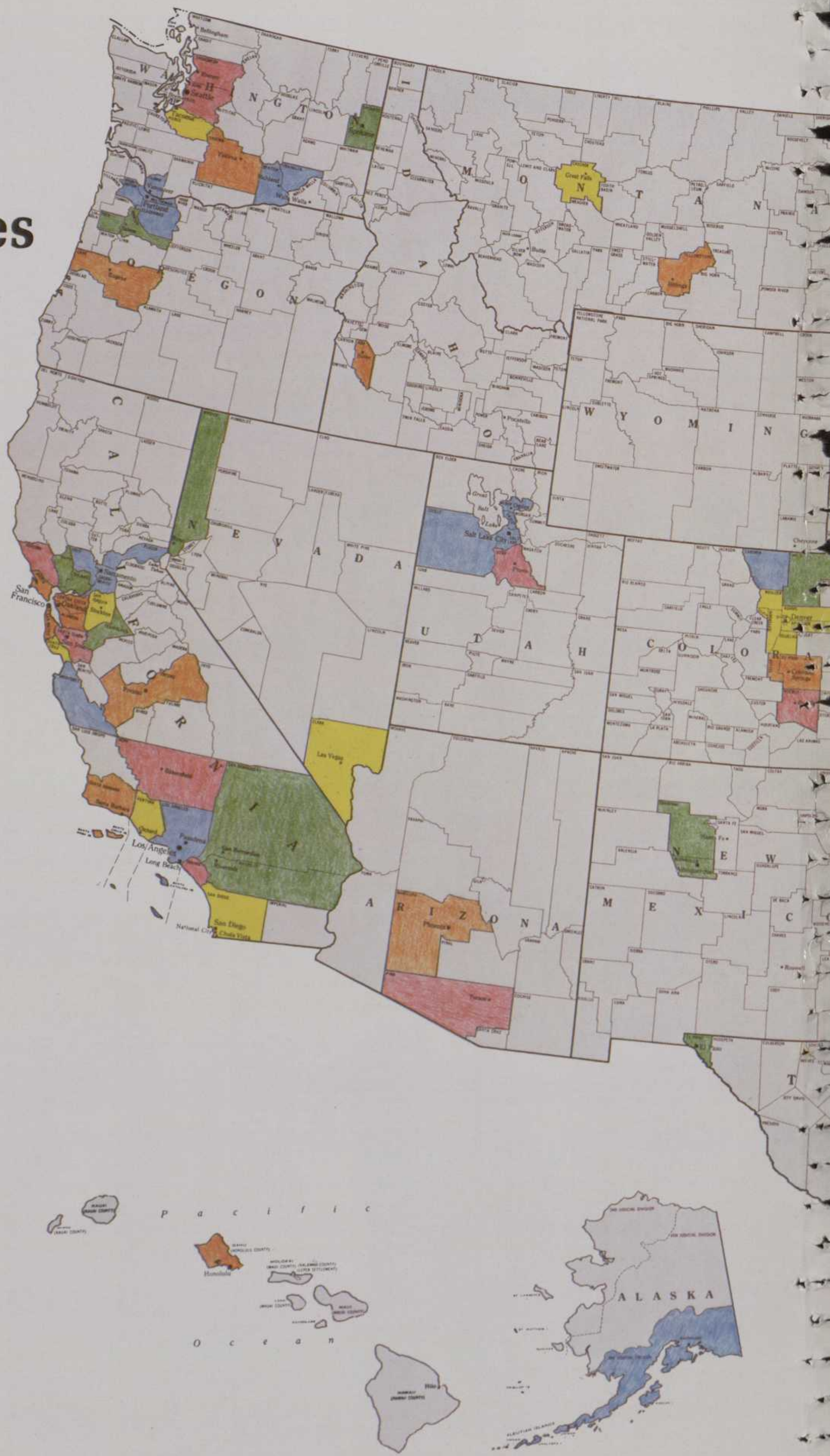
by Scott Scredon, assistant editor, from a study by Ed Wells, director of research & statistics, National Golf Foundation

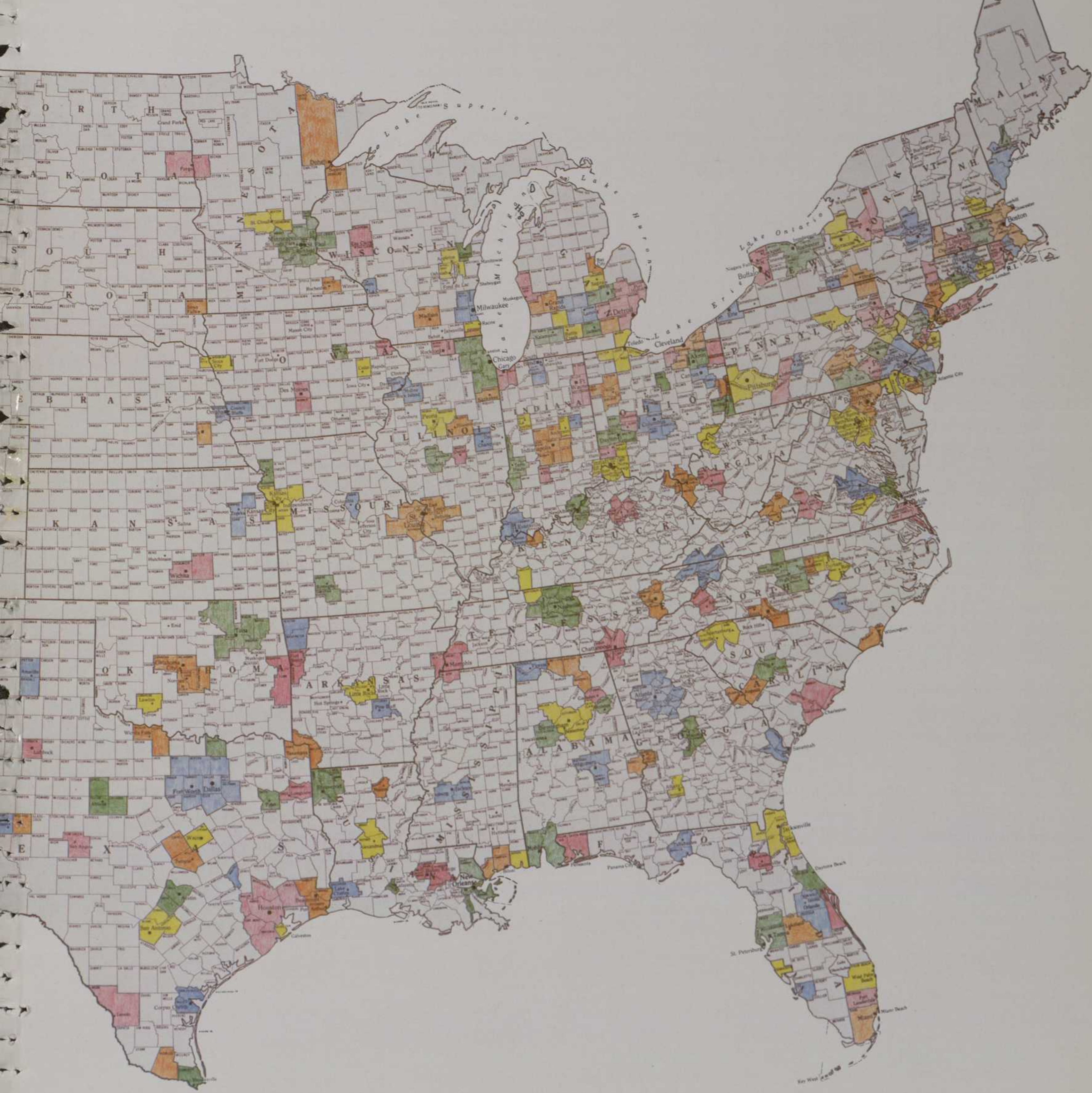
When officials of the National Golf Foundation's player development program begin their push next year to coax America's youth into playing golf, they will probably try harder to place a driver in the hands of a teenager in Johnstown, Pa. or Tyler, Tex., than in Houston or New York City.

The foundation will concentrate its efforts to bring more high-school age persons from suburban areas and smaller cities into the game, rather than from large metropolitan areas, following results of a study completed earlier this year.

The study showed what many golf industry officials probably knew already: that most major metropolitan areas lack the number of public courses needed to stimulate interest in the game, and that persons are fleeing these areas, going even beyond the suburbs to live in small towns and rural environments.

continued on page 28





DISTRIBUTION OF PUBLIC COURSES IN THE UNITED STATES

Each of the 259 individually shaded areas represents a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area. Included in these areas is 73 percent of the U.S. population, compared to 56 percent of the public golf courses.

Foundation researchers tallied the number of public golf courses in the 259 areas designated as Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSA) by the federal government. By also using U.S. Census Bureau population estimates, they could determine the ratio of golf courses to persons in each metropolitan area in the country and decide where their player development program can be most effective.

Based on the study results, the NGF may change the locations where they are trying to develop future golfers. In the past, it has tried to reach the most number of people in one area. This philosophy, however, will change.

"We're going to concentrate on the suburbs and the smaller metropolitan areas. We're going to take our program to areas where there are available golf courses, rather than people," said Ed Wells, NGF's director of research and statistics.

The foundation has held a spattering of golf education seminars this summer in selected cities, including Miami, Los Angeles, and Cheyenne, Wyo. Its six regional directors and 80-part time consultants plan to conduct seminars in high schools across the country next spring.

High school coaches will be contacted and some golf manufacturers will donate clubs and other equipment to the schools, hoping to induce administrators to teach the game in physical education classes. But the program will have to be directed at those youngsters most likely to pursue the sport out of school for the foundation's project to work.

Need people and courses

Wells expects the foundation to take its program to medium-size metropolitan areas.

"I don't think we'll go down to areas under 200,000," he said.

If so, this means the foundation could be making its pitch in areas like Greenville and Spartanburg, S.C.

An estimated 522,000 persons live in this three-county area in the northwest part of the state near Interstates 85 and 26. It has 14 daily fee and no municipal courses.

This means there are 41,800 persons for each 18-hole public golf course. This is much lower than the average national ratio of 52,500 persons for each public course in an SMSA. The area, therefore would seem to have an adequate number of public courses to handle the amount of potential golfers. (NGF's goal is one public course for every 25,000 persons).

On the other hand, Richmond, Va. and its surrounding six counties do not seem a likely candidate for the foundation's publicity campaign. The estimated 569,500 persons there have only eight daily fee courses, including two 9-hole facilities. The ratio is 81,400 persons for each 18-hole course.

"We're going to concentrate on the suburbs and the smaller metropolitan areas. We're going to take our program to areas where there are available golf courses, rather than people."

It also seems futile to indoctrinate youth to the game in many larger cities. There simply is no place to play.

Hudson County, N.J., which is immediately south of New York City, has one 9-hole daily fee course for its 583,000 residents.

Minneapolis-St. Paul, Chicago, Cleveland, Indianapolis, and Milwaukee are the only older metropolitan areas which come close to the average ratio.

In newer large metropolitan regions, however, public courses seem available, according to study results.

San Diego, Portland, and Seattle are near the national SMSA average. Although Phoenix attracts many wealthy retirees, it has 25 public and 17 executive courses for its 1.2 million residents.

The nation's fastest growing city, however, has a dismal person/public course ratio. There are only 18 courses for Houston's 2.2 million citizens, the study says, compared to 48 private courses.

Poor economic conditions have affected the number of courses in medium and large metropolitan areas of the Deep South. Montgomery, Tuscaloosa, and Gadsden, Ala., and Shreveport, Baton Rouge, and Alexandria, La., more than double the population average for each 18-hole course. Mobile, Ala. had only one course for every 88,100 persons and New Orleans one for every 99,100.

Public courses are most available and evenly distributed throughout Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Florida.

The smaller and medium-size cities in these six states are especially accessible. Of the 60 areas in these states with less than 1 million persons, 55 were below the average SMSA ratio. □

Golf cars are latecomers to nation's busiest facility

The clubhouse at Bethpage State Park was opened in 1935, the same year as the first three courses.

A conspicuous holdout against the use of golf cars didn't think it needed to do anything beyond what it was already doing so well — providing about twice as many rounds of golf as any other course complex in the United States. But state budget tightening, poor economic conditions, and aging patrons changed management's mind. Although 300,000 rounds of golf a year does not sound like a facility where patronage is falling off, that is just what had been happening at the world's biggest public golf course complex: Bethpage State Park on New York's Long Island.

The five Bethpage courses draw 1,400 to 1,700 rounds a day and have seen as many as 2,100. Many players, loyal since the early days of the park in the 1930's, were drifting away, however. They were getting along in years and the courses, which had no golf cars, were proving strenuous.

Bethpage held back from putting in golf cars until recent years because it

Golf cars are charged in Bethpage's storage shed, which can hold 150 cars.

Bethpage's golf cars are moved from storage shed to pickup station in trains of six. Front car easily pulls the train.

didn't feel the demand was there. Additionally, it felt that the course was too hilly, with elevation variations of up to 100 feet, for electric cars to make sufficient rounds on a night's charging.

"Now we have golf cars," says Eric Siebert, superintendent of the park, "and the players are coming back. Also, we have a new source of revenue."

Outside help

State funds were not available to fund a golf car installation, so the solution was a concession arrangement with Fairway Golf Car Co. of Medford, L.I., which made the necessary $300,000 capital investment. Aside from the cars themselves, this included a building to store the cars, recharging equipment, underground electric lines to bring in the current for charging, and a system of paths. The state will receive a percentage of the gross income from the golf car operation for 5 years. At the end of the 5 years, the state will own all of the structures built (but not the cars) and a new financial arrangement will be made at that time.

Fairway now has golf cars on two of the five Bethpage courses and hopes to extend its franchise to the other three soon. The concession started with 100 Johns-Manville Club Cars and expects to do over 200 rounds on each car during the golf season.

"In midsummer, cars are out at 5:30 a.m. and don't finish their day until 8:30 p.m."

"During some summer weekends, the cars have done as many as 54 holes — three full 18-hole rounds — in a day. This is due to the fact that these are the lightest golf cars built today," says Irwin Frick, partner in Fairway.

Long yardage and short charges

The golf car's ability to handle multiple rounds of golf is enhanced by its need for less battery charging time. Ideally, a golf car should have 11 hours of charging each night. At Bethpage, available charging time is short. In midsummer, cars are out at 5:30 a.m. and don't finish their day u.til 8:30 at night, giving only 9 hours in the charging shed. Club Cars have been able to sustain this schedule without difficulty.

the shed, 160 feet long and 32 feet wide, was built to hold 150 cars. By hooking them together in trains of six, one attendant driving the lead car is able to move the cars to the point near the first tee where golfers pick them up, and get them there fast enough to satisfy the high demand. The trains are longer than Frick had originally thought possible, but they are working well without draining the car doing the pulling.

Of the 1,475 acres of Bethpage State Park, about 900 are devoted to golf courses. The first three — the Red, the Blue and the Green — were opened in 1935. Lenox Hill, a private club built in 1921 and later turned over to the state as part of the Bethpage package, formed 16 of the 18 holes of the Green course. In 1936, the fourth course, the challenging Black, was opened. The final course, the Yellow, was added in 1958. A large clubhouse with pro shop, restaurant, and locker room facilities was completed in 1935.

Fairway began building the Bethpage golf car facilities in April 1976 and now has cars running on the Blue and Yellow courses. Adding cars to the Red course, the next in line to motorized, will bring Fairway's golf car fleet requirement at Bethpage up to 150.

Even when patronage seemed to be slowing, Bethpage's golfers continued to play in the snow and rain, and on summer weekends began lining up Friday night for Saturday morning tee times. Fortunately, getting more foursomes around the course faster is now possible with Bethpage's golf cars.□