

Kemper Open

The 1982 Kemper Open will again be held at the Congressional C.C. The tournament will be the week of June 1-7. GCSAA members and their families will again be given complimentary entrance to any practice or tournament round upon the presentation of their membership card at the will call trailer.

Vandalism of Courses Varies Around County

By Joe Gambatese
Special to the Journal

Vandalism has been the bane of golf clubs in this country almost from the day John Reid returned from a trip to Scotland in 1888 and built three holes in Yonkers, N.Y.

Golf course vandalism is a problem usually met with a shrug of the shoulders because it involves damage over a large, wide-open area and is hard to prevent despite fencing and security guards. And even when a culprit is apprehended, there's usually no punishment.

That may change if vandals like the one caught at Crofton CC come before a judge like George M. Taylor in Anne Arundel County.

An 18-year-old high school graduate, son of a Crofton community leader whose home abuts the gold course, was apprehended after he drove a car over a half-dozen greens, tees and fairways during the night.

William Berkshire, a part owner of Crofton, said that vandalism and thefts are a constant problem and estimated the damage in this particular incident at \$35,000.

The state's attorney's office recommended that the youth pay \$3000 at the rate of \$50 a month as reimbursement for damage, which also involved an athletic field and lawns of two private homes.

Judge Taylor, however, rejected the recommendation. He put the youth on four years' probation and ordered him to pay \$15,000 in \$250 monthly installments.

A random survey of county golf clubs and courses confirmed that vandalism continues to be a problem, although in varying degrees. Some are hit frequently and severely while others have only minor problems.

The vandalism ranges from theft of flagsticks and tee markers and damage to ball washers to severe and costly damage to putting greens.

Bob Shields, course superintendent at Woodmont and 1965 president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, says: "Vandalism

is such a constant problem that we inspect our two courses every morning before the greens are cut for any damage that might need repair."

Woodmont has suffered greens on which vehicles have been driven or holes dug with a shovel, golf carts driven into a pond, damaged ball washers, stolen flagsticks and holes cut into the perimeter fence.

At Montgomery Village they have to take the flagsticks in every night to prevent thefts. "We patrolled the course all night on Halloween, chasing kids off," said owner Jack Doser.

Two public courses; Northwest Park and Redgate, have problems with damage from dirt bikes running on the course.

"It's unbelievable," says Redgate pro Brooks Gerardi. "Somebody's even been driving a jeep on the course. Our biggest problem, however, is kids walking across the course and stealing flags and tee markers."

Unbelievable could also describe what happened at Bretton Woods. According to course superintendent Gerald Gerard Jr., someone dug a hole 18 inches deep and three feet in diameter in the 15th green and also dug up pieces of turf "which we replaced like a jig-saw puzzle."

That's not all. "We had a horse trample our practice green," he added. "Another time, someone cut down a tree which had a three-inch trunk. Last spring, someone dug up and stole 16 azalea bushes."

At Indian Spring, some greens have been dug up with a hand tool and obscene words written on them with spray paint.

Eddie Ault of Silver Spring, a course architect who has been called on to repair some of the damaged courses, says it can cost from \$1500 to \$4000 to repair a green that has been compacted by the weight of a heavy vehicle.

"It takes more than just replacing the sod," he explains. "The compaction can go down 10 or 12 inches and has to be dug out."

On the positive side, other public courses, Laytonsville, Falls Road, Needwood and Sligo Park, reported no problems. "I live next door to the course," said Dave Walker, Laytonsville's pro-manager, "and my superintendent lives in the middle of it." That's one way to prevent problems.

Montgomery CC has had no problems since it put up a fence. Other clubs checked, including Manor, Burning Tree, Columbia, Congressional, Chevy Chase and Kenwood, all feel "lucky" to have gotten off with only minor incidents of vandalism, if any.