

# MUNICIPAL GOLF

*Its Role in the American Golf Scene*

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\* This presentation by Mr. Eckhoff was made at the Ohio Parks and Recreation Association annual convention recently in Cincinnati. The golf outlook article was prepared additionally for WEEDS TREES and TURF.

**G**OLF, growing steadily ever since the end of World War II, took off like a rocket during the 1960s when the once exclusive game of the very rich became one enjoyed by all the people.

Daily fee courses in the nation experienced a meteoric rise of 85% during the decade ending Jan. 1, 1970; municipal operations increased 42% and private clubs 38%. New golf course openings during the same period averaged 354 a year.

The combination of increased leisure time, income and mobility has made recreation the fourth largest and fastest growing industry in the United States today. And golf has become the nation's fastest growing competitive outdoor sport. Alert American communities are providing more and better municipal golf facilities for their residents.

While municipal golf courses comprise only about 13% of the nation's 10,000-plus golfing facilities, they do play a leading role in the American golf scene. NGF's studies reveal that municipal courses (city, county or state operated) handle about 45% of the country's golf play.

This is believable when many cities report from 60,000 to 100,000-plus rounds played annually on each of their 18-hole layouts. A recent sampling survey shows an average of 53,194 rounds for the almost 100 facilities reporting. The sampling includes both large cities and small towns.

About 60% of the nation's 1300 municipal golf operations are located in 13 states. California leads with 122. Others high on the list are Texas, 102; Illinois, 82; New York, 78; and Indiana, 54. Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin and Florida each have 40 or more.

How do municipal golf courses operate? What are their policies on green fees, season rates, advance reservations, use of powered cars? And what special programs have some initiated that have proved popular and successful? Recent contact with some of the nation's outstanding municipal golf operations reveals some interesting trends.

## **Bethpage Park Golf Complex**

Bethpage, located in the central part of Long Island about 40 miles east of New York City, is often referred to as the most complete municipal golf plant in the world. Operated by the Bethpage State Park Authority, it has five 18-hole regulation length golf courses all operating from the same clubhouse. Once you tee off, the next time you are back at the clubhouse is after

you have holed out your putt on the 18th green.

Says Eric Siefert, Park Superintendent, "In the last 10 years our five 18-hole courses averaged about 320,000 rounds a year—last year 340,000 rounds were played. Because of space limitations there are no plans for expansion."

Green fees for 18 holes at Bethpage are \$2.50 weekdays; \$3.75 weekends and holidays. Bethpage offers no season rates; has no reservation system nor does it have powered cars. Since the opening of its fifth course in 1958, the Bethpage golf operation has always paid its own way. Seven private clubs (four men's and three for women) have been organized that use Bethpage facilities for their golfing activities.

#### Los Angeles—171 Golf Holes

Los Angeles City presently operates 13 golf courses. These include five regulation 18-hole layouts, four regulation 9-hole and four par-3 courses—a total of 126 regulation length holes and 45 par-3 holes. Grand total—171 holes. During the past five years golf play has averaged more than one million rounds annually on those 13 facilities.

Daily green fees for 18 holes (fees are the same every day of the week) are \$3; with reservations — \$3.50. The charge for a replay (a second 18 the same day) is \$1.50. Also offered is a monthly permit (not good on Saturdays, Sundays or holidays)—cost \$6. Holders of this permit may play 18 holes of golf on weekdays for \$2.

Says Ray Goates, City Golf Manager, "Powered golf cars are available to the public at the city's five 18-hole courses only. They are supplied and maintained by a private concession. A fleet of 195 cars is in use on the five courses and rental fees are \$7 for 18 holes." According to Goates, a \$9 million program to add 72 holes of golf from self-liquidating bonds is now being considered by the Los Angeles City Council.

#### Milwaukee County's 12 Courses

Like the City of Los Angeles, the Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, Park Commission also operates 171 holes of municipal golf. Facilities here include one 9-hole and six 18-hole regulation courses plus one 18- and four 9-hole par-3 layouts.

Milwaukee County offers no season rates; does have a reservation



HARRY ECKHOFF

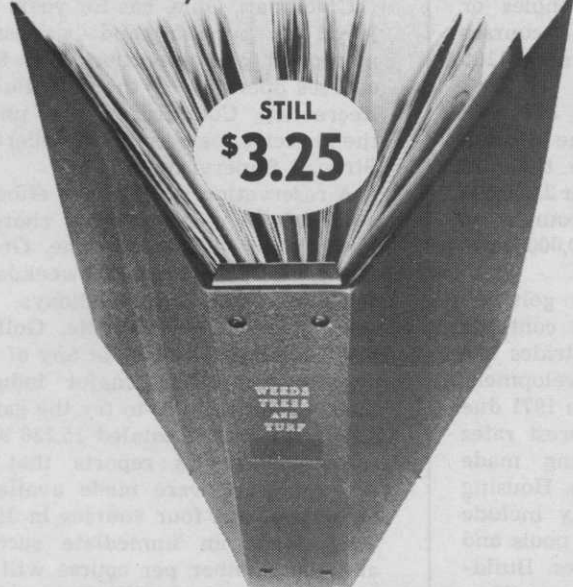
system—charges 50¢ per player for reservations; has powered golf cars only at its new 18-hole, 6910 yard, J. C. Dretzka course. Rental charge is \$6 for 18 holes.

Current adult green fees for 18 holes are \$2 any day. Says William Felton, Jr., Milwaukee County Park Commission Education and Information Officer, "We are anticipating a raise in fees for 1971 which would bring an 18-hole adult permit to \$3 and raise other rates accordingly." About 700,000 daily play permits are sold annually at the county's 12 golf courses.

#### Ohio Municipal Golf

As stated earlier, Ohio, with more than 40 municipal golf courses, is one of the 13 leading states contain-

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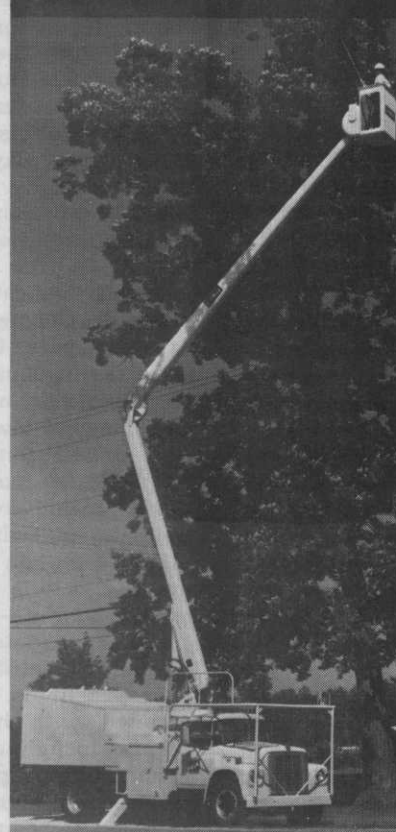
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## GOLF OUTLOOK

By HARRY C. ECKHOFF

WITH 393 new golf courses or additions to existing facilities in some stage of construction at year's end, 1971 should be an excellent year for golf course development. NGF records reveal that 352 of the above mentioned courses are regulation length facilities; 41 are par-3 or executive type.

New regulation length courses in the under-construction category total 252; additions to regulation courses account for 100. For par-3s the figures are 28 and 13, respectively.

Leading states with new golf courses under construction are California, 23; Ohio, 22; Florida, 19; Michigan, 18; New York and Pennsylvania, 16; North Carolina and Texas, 15; Georgia, Tennessee and Washington, 14 each.

Despite the prolonged tight money situation, NGF reports that 314 regulation length facilities (213 new ones and 101 additions to existing courses) opened in 1970. About 42% of these new facilities were private operations, 46% semi-private or daily fee and 12% municipal.

Thirty-eight new par-3 operations (29 new courses and 9 additions) also were reported in play in 1970. Their breakdown by type was 21% private, 71% semi-private and 8% municipal. About one third of the new courses were associated with real estate developments. The total golf course openings of 352 for 1970 were about 9% less than in 1969 when 397 new facilities opened for play.

The leading states with new golf course openings in 1970 were Florida, 26; Texas, 24; California, 21; New York, North Carolina and Pennsylvania, each 18; Michigan,

16; Georgia, 14; Washington and Wisconsin, 13; Illinois, 12; Iowa and Virginia, 11; and Minnesota 10.

NGF records reveal there were 10,188 golf courses in play in the nation at the end of fiscal year 1970. Of these, 4619 were private operations; 4248 were semi-private or daily-fee types and 1321 were municipal. 5343 were 9-hole layouts; 4845 were 18 holes or more. Regulation length courses totaled 9083; the remaining 1105 were par-3 layouts.

NGF estimates there are now 9,700,000 golfers in the United States who play more than 15 rounds annually. Another 2,200,000 play fewer than 15 rounds — making a total of 11,900,000 golfers.

Trends indicate that golf facility development will continue at a fast pace. Great strides are expected in housing development throughout the nation in 1971 due to somewhat lower interest rates and more money being made available for mortgages. Housing developments frequently include golf courses, swimming pools and other recreation facilities. Builders are selling environment as well as houses — thus providing a place for one to live and play. Probably a third of the new golf courses built in 1971 will be associated with housing developments including new planned communities, high rise apartment and condominium complexes and vacation or resort homes.

ing such facilities. The greater Cleveland area has 162 holes of municipal golf—72 holes operated by the Cleveland City Department of Parks and Recreation and 90 holes operated by the Cleveland Metropolitan Park System.

The Cleveland City operation includes two excellent 36-hole facilities — Highland Park and Seneca. Both have complete irrigation systems. The first two Cleveland Opens were played at Highland Park in 1964 and 1965.

Green fees for 18 holes at the Cleveland courses are \$3 any day. Also available is a season rate good for unlimited golf play—cost: \$115 for residents; \$190 for non-residents. Senior citizens age 65 and over may play golf on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday until 3 p.m. at the special rate of \$1 for 9 holes; \$1.75 for 18.

The six municipal courses (90 holes) operated by the Metropolitan Park System are under the general supervision of Harry Burkhardt, Superintendent of Golf for Cleveland Metropolitan Parks. Like the Cleveland city facilities, they are excellent golf courses. Green fees on the metropolitan courses vary from \$3 for 18 holes and \$1.50 for 9 to \$4 for 18 and \$2.25 for 9, depending on the course played. Many of the area industrial leagues use these courses and the play all week is reported as heavy.

Cincinnati, Ohio, has for years enjoyed a popular and successful municipal golf operation. The four courses operated by the City Public Recreation Commission are under the direct supervision of Robert J. Strauss, Supervisor of Golf.

A reservation system is in effect—a fee of 10¢ per person is charged for a reserved starting time. Green fees for 18 holes are \$2.60 weekdays; \$3.30 weekends and holidays. No season rates are available. Golfers may rent a set of clubs at any of the courses for 50¢—a major inducement for a beginner to try the game. Last year rentals totaled 15,736 sets.

Robert Strauss reports that 14 powered cars were made available at each of the four courses in 1970. They were an immediate success and the number per course will be increased to 20 in 1971. Rental fees for 18 holes are \$6 weekdays; \$7 weekends and holidays.

Says Strauss, "Perhaps the most meaningful municipal golf programs we have initiated have been the Men's Senior Golfers Organizations and the Women's Golfers groups formed at each of the four courses. These groups are granted weekday morning starting time reservations

and pay regular green fees. They conduct their own affairs completely—have wonderful golfing fun and use the courses at times when play is not too heavy.”

Membership in each of the organizations is held to 100 because of starting time limitations. Clubs at two of the courses have waiting lists. Senior citizens may play 18 holes for \$1.50 Monday through Friday from opening of course to 12:00 noon tee-off time.

A Youth Golf Association involving hundreds of boys and girls 18 years of age, or younger, is also sponsored by the Cincinnati Recreation Commission. Requirements for membership — signing a pledge to abide by course rules and the etiquette of golf and payment of a \$1 annual registration fee. Members have the privilege of playing one day a week at each course during specified hours for a \$1 green fee. During summer vacation YGA members must tee off before 10 a.m. and complete their play by 2 p.m.

#### Atlanta Operational Policies

Atlanta, Ga., operates seven municipal golf courses—four 18-hole layouts and three 9-hole facilities—a total of 99 holes. Brown’s Mill, a new 18-hole course, opened for play in September, 1970. The city plans to have two additional 18-hole courses by 1985.

According to Martin Petsonk, City Superintendent of Golf Courses, golf play on the Atlanta courses has been averaging about 200,000 rounds annually. There is no reservation system; they operate on a policy of first come, first served. Weekday 18-hole green fees are \$3; weekends and holidays \$4. Nine-hole fees are \$1.50 and \$2 respectively. City offers season rates as follows: yearly pass good on all city courses—\$100; yearly pass good only on one course—\$75; senior pass (over age 65) good on all courses—\$50. All golfers must sign in with the golf starter. Foursomes only are permitted on weekends during periods of heavy play.

Powered golf cars are available. They have an average of 30 cars at the 18-hole courses; 15 cars at the 9-hole facilities. Course regulations state that powered cars must stay off tees and 30 feet from the greens. There can be only two riders to each car and riders must have valid driver’s licenses.

#### Union County Golf Program

The Union County (New Jersey) Park Commission has for years had a very successful municipal golf

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operation. Its facilities include the 27-hole Galloping Hill course at Kenilworth and the 18-hole Ash Brook layout at Scotch Plains. According to George Cron, General Superintendent, Galloping Hill serves about 85,000 players a year; Ash Brook averages 60,000 annually.

Galloping Hill Golf Course maintains a fleet of 30 powered cars; Ash Brook has 25. Rental fees are \$8 for 18 holes; \$4 for 9. Union County has a special green fee schedule for county residents who annually qualify for a golf identification card. This fee is only about half the amount charged non-resident players. Green fees for out-of-county players for 18 holes are \$4 weekdays; \$6.50 weekends and holidays.

#### Increased Maintenance Costs

Like most expenses, those for course maintenance are increasing, so some municipalities are raising green fees. Atlanta, Ga., this year increased its 9-hole weekday rate from \$1 to \$1.50 and 9-hole weekend rate from \$1.50 to \$2. Eighteen-hole weekday rate went from \$2 to \$3; weekend and holiday rate, \$3 to \$4.

Asheville, N.C., raised its annual resident season permit from \$80 to \$100. Fees were also upped this year at the eight Denver, Colo., municipal golf operations. As stated previously, Milwaukee County plans to raise its green fees 33½% next year—from \$2 to \$3 for 18 holes. The prevailing rate at many mid-Atlantic municipal courses for 18 holes is \$3 weekdays; \$4 weekends and holidays; after 5 p.m.—\$2 any day.

Maintenance costs increased about

6% last year. Over the past 15 years they have increased 85%. Findings of a nationwide survey of 75 representative courses reveal maintenance costs averaged \$4,577 per hole of which \$2,824 was for salaries and wages and \$1,753 for all other expenses. Range for an 18-hole layout was from about \$60,000 to more than \$100,000.

#### Golf Course Planning

When should a municipality consider the development of public golf courses? An acceptable yardstick for daily fee and municipal courses is one 18-hole operation for every 20,000 to 25,000 persons. City and town officials considering the development of a municipal golf course often appoint a citizens committee to make a detailed study for such a project along with specific recommendations for its accomplishment—if the project is deemed feasible.

Included in the study will be complete justification for the need and desirability of a golf course for the area; suggested sites along with expected land acquisition and course construction costs; suggested methods of financing the entire project and estimated operating income and expenses for the planned facilities.

Many municipalities developing golf facilities are taking advantage of a state grant-in-aid program administered by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, U.S. Department of Interior. Under this program, local governments may submit requests to their respective state offices for outright grants to acquire

or develop urgently needed public outdoor recreation facilities.

Most existing municipal golf courses were financed by general obligation bonds issued by the municipality concerned or by general budget allocations. In recent years, cities and counties having legal authority to do so have financed many municipal courses through the issuance of revenue bonds which are payable from the net income received from the operation of the golf course.

Such net income can be and often is substantial. Municipal golf courses can be profitable if realistic green fees are charged and the facilities are properly managed. Actually, golf course revenues can and frequently do go a long way toward providing the free recreation facilities for communities since the golf course usually is the largest revenue-producing unit in a recreation program.

And this is but one of the ways in which a golf course benefits a community. There are many others. Golf facilities stimulate civic pride and create new business; they beautify and preserve open space and increase property values in surrounding areas; they attract new industry, tourists and conventions and—perhaps most important—they provide healthful, enjoyable recreation for all age groups.

It is doubtful that the nation will ever have sufficient municipal golf courses to meet the constant growing need. It is certain that municipal golf will play an increasing role in the overall American golf scene in the years ahead.

## insect report



### TURF INSECTS AN AEROCOCCID SCALE (*Eriococcus carolinae*)

MARYLAND: Light infestation on beachgrass near Ocean City, Worcester County. This is a new state record.

### A MARCH FLY (*Dilophus orbatus*)

CALIFORNIA: Larvae 1,000 per square yard in one-eighth acre of *Lippia* sp. and grass sod in nursery at Oakland, Alameda County. Larvae 15 per square foot in some lawns and up to thousands along walks and driveways at Sacramento, Sacramento County; 50 per square yard at Fresno, Fresno County. Adults heavy in some lawns at Madera, Madera County.

### INSECTS OF ORNAMENTALS A CONIFER APHID (*Cinara tujafilina*)

OKLAHOMA: Counts and colony size increased on

arborvitae in Payne County past 21 days. Up to 25 aphids per colony.

### YUCCA PLANT BUG (*Halticotoma valida*)

MISSISSIPPI: Moderate to heavy on yucca plants in Montgomery, Choctaw, and Oktibbeha Counties.

### TREE INSECTS

#### ELM LEAF BEETLE (*Pyrrhalta luteola*)

KANSAS: Overwintering adults found under firewood at roadside park north of Syracuse, Hamilton County, and same location in park at Tribune, Greeley County. These are new county records. Now occurs statewide.

#### OBSCURE SCALE (*Melanaspis obscura*)

ALABAMA: Dominant scale species on 80% of oak trees growing on lawns and streets at Auburn, Lee County. Many heavily infested with lower limbs dead or dying. Scales on many limbs touch and overlap.