

What Organization Can Accomplish for Public Golf

JAMES D. STANDISH, JR.

One of the most common complaints which comes to the Public Links Committee of the United States Golf Association is that public links are not kept in proper playing condition, and that the money received by the proprietors as fees is not expended for the betterment of the golf areas but is turned to other channels not of direct benefit to the golf players.

A most glaring example of this condition has existed in New York City for some time, but recently through the efforts of Mr. C. M. H. Atherton, who is a member of the United States Golf Association Committee, the New York Municipal Golf Association has been formed, the principal object of which is to bring about better public links conditions in New York City. In reply to a letter requesting information on the subject of this newly-formed association, Mr. Atherton wrote the following letter, which may suggest a method of procedure to other communities which are experiencing difficulty in convincing local authorities that golf links should be kept up to a certain standard of condition to render a maximum of service to the golfing public:

New York, N. Y., January 28, 1923.

DEAR MR. STANDISH:—

In answer to your letter of the 23d asking for an article on the formation of the New York Municipal Golf Association, I must tell you that I am no writer, but I will tell you how the Association was formed, and, as far as I am able, what are its objects.

The Van Cortlandt Park golf course, which is the one most heavily patronized by the golfers of New York, because of its accessibility, was in terrible shape in the summer of 1921. Individual protests were continual, but nothing was done to improve conditions on the course, and it looked as if the same conditions would prevail during the following year. In the winter of 1921-1922 it was announced that the permit fee would be raised from \$5 to \$10. This announcement was received with indignation by the New York golfers, for it was well known that of the \$65,000 paid into the municipal treasury by them during 1921 for permits, about \$40,000 had been appropriated to park uses, and of this \$40,000 only \$15,000 was spent directly on the upkeep of the golf courses, three in number, or about \$5,000 to each course, the remainder having been used for baseball diamonds, tennis courts, etc. Shortly after hearing this news, I asked a representative from each of the five clubs using the public links to go with me, as a committee, to have a conference with the Commissioner of Parks. At this conference we said to him, "We come here as a committee representing about 500 golfers to inquire why the permit fee has been raised, and also to find out whether there will be a proportionate increase in the amount appropriated directly to the public courses," or words to that effect. We were made to understand that the commissioner had no interest in golf. We said to him, "There will be a big kick from the golfers if this raise goes into effect, and no improvement in the courses is made." He replied, "Let them kick." Thereupon we decided that the only way to effect any improvement in conditions was to rouse the great body of golfers to such a point that an association would be formed, with enough voting power to compel the city authorities to sit up and take notice. Accordingly I wrote an explanatory pamphlet, and it was spread broadcast over the three public courses. The five clubs using the public links then voted to become members of the proposed association, giving us a membership at the start of about 500. The summer of 1922 found the courses in far worse condition than in 1921, although the permit fee had been doubled, and, although protests were numerous, nothing was done in the way of improvement, and the golfers decided that if anything was ever to be done to make the courses play-

able they themselves would have to see that it was done. Accordingly a meeting was held recently, at which the association was formally inaugurated, officers elected, and plans made for the summer of 1923, which we hope will bear fruit.

The chairman of our green committee is, we believe, a most efficient man; and prominent men in various walks of life have been appointed to other committees. We hope to bring such pressure to bear on the city authorities that they will come to understand that the golfers of New York form a very substantial part of its voting population and that what they are legitimately entitled to must be accorded them.

Very truly yours,

CHAS. M. H. ATHERTON.

The New York Municipal Golf Association has the assurance of the backing of the Metropolitan Golf Association, and it will indeed be a surprise if this great body of golfers can not bring about a change in conditions at Van Cortlandt Park which will thoroughly satisfy the golfers playing there. This movement endorses the article on the advantages of organization by Mr. W. G. Curtis, which is published elsewhere in this number of THE BULLETIN, and is a matter which should be given careful attention in all golfing centers. The Public Links Committee of the United States Golf Association is most anxious to be of assistance to any groups planning organization, and any advice as to details of management that can be given will receive the closest attention.

In Chicago, the Cook County Municipal Golf Association has been in existence some years, and the fact that public links golf is more advanced there than in any other city in the United States bears testimony to the value of that association of public spirited individuals. Mr. Robert W. McKinlay, who is president of this organization, writes in a most instructive manner of the way they do things in the middle west:

Chicago, Ill., January 28, 1923.

DEAR MR. STANDISH:—

Chicago is today unquestionably the center of the public course movement in America. During this year there will be twelve public courses open to the general public, where the game of golf can be enjoyed at a very nominal fee. In addition there will be in the neighborhood of ten semi-public courses, which also will be available to the public upon payment of a fee averaging \$1 week-days except Saturdays and holidays, on the latter days, with Sunday included, a fee of \$1.50 to \$2. Notwithstanding all of these courses already referred to there will be literally thousands of men and women whose only chance to play is on Saturday, Sunday and holidays, who will be barred because of the congestion.

Some idea may be had of the condition when it is known that at Jackson Park, on an 18-hole course, 124,584 golfers teed off between March 25 and December 15, 1922. Contrast with this the fact that at Olympia Fields, with three 18-hole courses in operation, only 60,000 teed off, this being a private club. Notwithstanding that we are far from realizing the number of courses which are needed in Chicago and Cook County, I have taken an interest in the public course movement in other portions of our country, having received and answered many letters of inquiry as to how to proceed to secure a course. Recently I was invited to Jacksonville, Ill., and addressed a large and enthusiastic gathering of men and women golfers. Steps were taken at this meeting to form a central Illinois municipal association composed of public course clubs in cities such as Springfield, Peoria, and others. At Jacksonville there is at present a 9-hole course, and the players there are bringing pressure to bear on the Park Board to extend the same into an 18-hole course. In order to help them I have secured a promise from "Chick" Evans to play an exhibition match on Sunday, June 3, with some other well-known player. This event will attract hundreds of people from Jacksonville and surrounding towns and cities and

the effect undoubtedly will be to clear the way for the 18-hole course by making an impression upon the minds of the members of the Park Board.

It is my ambition to see the movement grow (and it is rapidly growing) to the end that every town of 2,500 or more population in the State of Illinois can boast of its municipal golf course.

Golf is unquestionably destined to be the national game of America, and if the friends of the movement will organize in their respective communities they can secure favorable action from park boards, city councils, and other governmental agencies.

ROBERT W. MCKINLAY,

President, Cook County Municipal Golf Association.

Much enthusiasm can always be aroused by exhibition matches, and leading players throughout the country are always glad to help along the growth of the game of golf by lending their services. Especially in smaller communities is this method of value in stimulating interest, and a large number of converts to the game generally results.

The United States Golf Association Executive Committee hopes that the organization of a national municipal association under its jurisdiction will not be long delayed, but until such time as smaller units are formed and functioning, it does not seem feasible to proceed with the project of an all-inclusive association. With municipal golf proceeding as rapidly as it is at present, however, the day of such a national organization does not seem far away.

The Emphatic Need of Public Golf ¹

SYLVANUS PIERSON JERMAIN

President of the Toledo District Golf Association

Every city or community planning a movement for public golf should first make a comprehensive survey of all possible golf course sites in its public parks. If there be a Forest Preserve Commission, or if the county commissioners have under their control tracts of available and suitable land, these should be included in such survey and its specific report. Having determined these facts, a definite "starting base" and "talking point" is established. Generally speaking, any such movement will occur in a city district having a number of (or possibly many) country clubs. From these a local committee should be formed, of public-spirited men, to take the matter actively in hand. What golf has done for them it will do for "the other fellow."

If a district golf association exists, a public golf committee from its organization is very effective. These committees may find that none of the public officials ever played golf and hence it does not appeal to them. It may even have their active hostility. They need to be converted to the idea by being introduced to, and converted to the game itself. A visit to any of the country clubs and an afternoon or two upon the beautiful courses will prove a revelation and delight to them. It will open to them a new life of the best kind of happiness. It will bring a return of their boyhood days. To many it will be a genuine emancipation and rebirth of youth. In no other way can anyone really understand the appeal of golf, its real meaning and need in a mature man's life. This

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