

Public Golf at the Capital of the Nation

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The public golf links at Washington are not, as might naturally be supposed, operated by the municipal authorities, but are located in the city's public parks, which are owned and operated by the Federal Government and administered by the Chief of Engineers of the Army through an officer of that corps whose official title is the Officer in Charge of Public Buildings and Grounds.

The second largest area in this park system, known as Potomac Park, contains about 739 acres, which have been built up by the deposit upon what was known as the "Potomac Flats," of material dredged from the river in the process of improving the navigable channel of the stream. These flats were noisome marshes bare at low tide, and the dredged material has covered these with a rich deposit of alluvial soil capable of producing a spontaneous rich growth of vegetation. The work of improving this park was commenced in 1902 and consisted of grading, constructing roads and lawn surfaces, planting, etc.; but nothing was done in the way of supplying facilities for golf until 1914, when a three-hole practice course was constructed in West Potomac Park. This course, however, was not much used until 1919, when from 8,000 to 10,000 players availed themselves of its privileges during the course of the year, while in 1920 it was used by over 11,000 players. The enlargement of this course to nine holes was completed in September, 1921, and it is now used by beginners who are not qualified to play on the East Potomac Park course.

The plan favored by the Federal authorities for the improvement of Potomac Park contemplates the development of its eastern section, which embraces nearly half the area of the entire park, as a vast recreation ground provided with a stadium, a large field house, baseball fields, tennis courts, golf courses, etc. Thus far, however, these recreation facilities, because of limited funds, have been confined to the construction of golf links, of which there are now two nine-hole courses, and the erection of the two wings of the field club house.

The construction of the first of the nine-hole courses in this eastern section was commenced in 1918 and completed in 1920. In laying out and building this course the advice of prominent golf architects and expert players was freely availed of, with the result that a course has been produced which, while only slightly undulating owing to the natural topography of the ground, is pronounced to be one of the best in this vicinity. The course was opened to the public in July, 1920. The completion of the two wings of the field house, for which special funds had been provided, was coincident with the completion of the course. One of these wings is used by men and one by women. Each wing is provided with lockers and showers, and the use of these by patrons of the course is included in the nominal sum charged for games. The wings are provided at the ends with porches, glass-enclosed in cold weather. The porch of the men's wing opens out almost directly on the starting tee. From this porch a most delightful view of the first portion of the course is obtained.

Work on the second nine-hole course was commenced in the latter part of 1920, and on August 1, 1922, four holes of the course were opened to players. It is expected that the remaining five holes will be ready for use in May, 1923.

The length of each of these nine-hole courses is about 3,300 yards. The close proximity of Potomac Park to the city, lying as it does almost within a stone's throw of the business section, makes the golf links easily accessible and very popular, as evidenced by the attendance during the calendar year 1922, which, on the completed nine-hole course in East Potomac Park, was 80,420, on the four-hole course nearly 17,000, and on the practice course in West Potomac Park over 58,000, or a total of more than 155,000 players on the three courses.

There is a fourth course under Governmental supervision. This is in Rock Creek Park, an area of great natural beauty located in the valley of Rock Creek which runs through it from end to end. The park contains about 1,600 acres and is situated in a rapidly growing residential section in the northwest part of the city. The following beautiful description of this park was given in a report made in 1867 by the Officer in Charge of Public Buildings and Grounds in obedience to a Senate resolution providing for the selection of a suitable site for a public park: "In no place has nature been more bountiful of her charms than in the vicinity of this city, and all can be found so near and accessible; the valley of Rock Creek and its tributaries, the Broad and Piney Branches and several minor rivulets, with the adjoining hills overlooking these beautiful streams, presents to the Capital of the nation advantages not to be lightly disregarded in providing a park worthy of a great people. All the elements which constitute a public resort of the kind can be found in this wild and romantic tract of country. With its charming drives and walks, its hills and dales, its pleasant valleys and deep ravines, its primeval forests and cultivated fields, its running waters, its rocks clothed with rich fern and mosses, its repose and tranquillity, its light and shade, its ever-varying shrubbery, its beautiful and extensive views, the locality is already possessed with all the features necessary for the object in view."

When the land embraced in this park was acquired in 1894 by a commission created by Congress for the purpose, it was placed for administrative purposes under a board of control of which the Chief of Engineers was a member. In September, 1918, however, exclusive jurisdiction over the park was transferred by Congress to the Chief of Engineers, who placed it in the immediate charge of the Officer in Charge of Public Buildings and Grounds as part of the park system under the Federal Government, but no special work for the preparation of areas for athletic purposes was inaugurated until October, 1921, when the construction of a nine-hole golf course was commenced. This was completed in September, 1922, and it will be opened to the public during the spring of 1923. It is located in about the center of the park west of Sixteenth Street.

This course is a notable one and compares favorably with the best in this section of the country. It has been constructed with the same care and attention to detail as that which characterized the building of the courses in East Potomac Park, but surpasses those both in appearance

and playing advantages because of the natural undulating surfaces of the ground and the beautiful views which are unfolded along the entire course. The physical comfort of players will also be cared for, as it is proposed to fit up as a club house an old dwelling house within the golf course area, by remodelling it so as to provide a reading and rest room, locker rooms, showers, and other conveniences which are now considered essential to the successful operation of athletic grounds. These will no doubt be appreciated by the patrons of this course. The opening of this latest addition to the public golf playing facilities of the National Capital is being looked forward to with the greatest interest by the lovers of the sport, and it is believed that the course will prove to be immensely popular.

Notes on Public Links Golf

The second annual Public Links Championship tournament was awarded to Washington, D. C., at a recent meeting of the Executive Committee of the United States Golf Association. The date will be announced later, but the plan is to hold it either just before or just after the Open Championship. The East Potomac Park course, where the event is to be held, is being increased to eighteen holes and will offer a most satisfactory test, while the pledged cooperation of the District Park Department insures a successful event.

The Public Links Section of the United States Golf Association for the year 1923 will be composed of 14 members, 3 of whom will constitute an executive committee, to handle all routine business. This committee is representative of all sections of the country, and each man is thoroughly interested in developing the game of golf, and especially in spreading knowledge of the traditions, etiquette, and rules of the game. The personnel of the 1923 committee follows:

James D. Standish, Jr. (Chairman Executive Committee), 314 Ford Bldg., Detroit, Mich.

Sylvanus P. Jermain (member Executive Committee), P. O. Box 362, Toledo, Ohio.

A. T. Packard (member Executive Committee), Care *Chicago Evening Post*, Chicago, Ill.

Roger D. Lapham, 503 Market St., San Francisco, Calif.

Chas. M. H. Atherton, 347 East 47th St., New York, N. Y.

T. C. McSheehy, M. D., 86 Burnham St., Worcester, Mass.

Henry L. West, 2659 Connecticut Ave., Washington, D. C.

Malcolm McGregor, Dime Bank Bldg., Detroit, Mich.

George E. Kreidler, Newark, N. J.

O. B. Keeler, *The Atlanta Star*, Atlanta, Ga.

Bonner Miller, 1000 North 22d St., St. Louis, Mo.

E. D. Mendell, 205 South 9th St., Philadelphia, Pa.

J. J. Burke, Internal Revenue Service, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Robert W. McKinlay, 537 County Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

It seems probable that some method of limiting the number of entries for the 1923 Public Links Championship will be necessary and that sectional qualifying rounds will be adopted as the elimination process. It is most unfortunate that an 18-hole course can not accommodate more than 150 players under present conditions of playing this championship, as we would like to have all the public links golfers in the United States gather in Washington if it were possible,