

Philadelphia Inquirer
January 21, 1915

MUNICIPAL GOLF COURSE ASSURED

President Lesley Announces
That Plot of Ground at
Cobbs Creek Park Secured

Individual Championship Tourney
Open to Players in Future Whose
Maximum Is Ten Strokes or Under

A municipal golf course, open specially to the golfing public of this city and its vicinity, is now assured and will become a reality early the coming summer, this statement being made as official by Robert W. Lesley, of the Merion Cricket Club, who is also president of the Golf Association of Philadelphia at the annual meeting of the association held last night at the Adelphia Hotel. Mr. Lesley, along with seven presidents of the various golf clubs in this vicinity, has been working on the project for the last two years and through their efforts a plot of ground has been allotted for the public course in Cobbs Creek Park, which is close to the city, within five minutes' walk of two trolley lines and can be reached from almost any part of the city for a five-cent fare.

It is the intention of those responsible for the laying out of the course to engage experts who will supervise the whole affair with a view of having a public golf course second to none in the country and the equal of any in the world, according to President Lesley, who is also chairman of the Committee of Presidents, who had the matter in hand. While nothing definite has yet been decided upon when the course will be opened, it was announced last night that at least three of the holes will be ready for play either the latter part of April or early in May. There will be eighteen holes laid, giving the public an opportunity to become better versed in the qualities of the game by actual participation without having to pay a cent for the privilege.

Philadelphia Inquirer
January 24, 1915

Drives and Putts

Being Gossip About Golf and Golfers

By Joe Bunker

THE most important announcement made at the annual meeting of the Philadelphia Golf Association was that concerning the public golf course in Cobb's Creek Park. For more than ten years efforts have been made to interest the Fairmount Park Commissioners in the project, but most of these efforts lacked both enthusiasm and hard work.

It was not until two years ago, when Robert W. Lesley appointed a committee of golf club presidents that the work progressed. Every section of Fairmount Park was visited in an effort to find a section which would accommodate itself to a public course, but while there are 3400 odd acres in the Park none was available and meant either a short course or the destruction of trees. The first did not suit the players and the last was something that the commissioners would not tolerate.

Fortunately, the new Cobb's Creek Park solved the situation. There are over 800 acres there, so the northwestern end of it was taken for golf purposes and instead of having a short course patterned so far as distances are concerned after Palm Beach and numerous other Florida resorts Philadelphia will have a real eighteen-hole course with a playing length of 6400 yards, or about as long as Whitemarsh, the longest course in this city.

The trouble with the public courses in New York and Chicago and other cities is that because of the restricted area of ground there are too many short holes, and thus on a public course where the players are not as proficient as at the clubs is a very serious problem, as it accentuates the congestion. The ground at Cobb's Creek is rolling and on no less than seven holes the creek itself will be used as a hazard and on one hole the stream acts as a double hazard.

In order that there may be as little congestion as possible there are two holes where it will be necessary for the players to walk a hundred yards or more. This will allow the players ahead to get out of the way more quickly and should cut down the congestion to a minimum. Such experts as Hugh Wilson, who laid out the Merion and Seaview courses, George Klaunder, one of the constructors of the Aronimink course, and Ab Smith, who has done a lot for the Huntingdon Valley course, have laid out the course in Cobb's Creek Park and work will begin in the early spring. There are so many natural hazards that this problem has not been much of a bother to the golf architects.

The chief recommendation for any public course, outside of the links itself, is the matter of accessibility and low fares. Two street car lines will take the players within a very few minutes' walk of the course, and it is accessible from the centre of the city to such an extent that only twenty minutes are required to get there. Later on there will be at least one station of the Philadelphia and Western on the property. Perhaps the chief argument that was made against the public course was that it would be monopolized by persons who are already golfers. As a matter of fact there are so many more advantages belonging to memberships in private clubs that very few club golfers will use the public courses. Naturally, the course will be run on strictly business principles and the early bird gets the worm cast, to paraphrase an old saw. The result will be that after some of the golfers have tried out the new course they will go back to their own clubs and leave the course to the general public.

Golf, outside of polo, yachting and a few other sports that belong to the wealthy class, is the most expensive of games. It costs the club member anywhere from \$250 a year and upwards. It has been this cost that has kept boys particularly from playing it. The public course will do away with all this. There will be a nominal charge for playing over the course and a small tax for the lockers. Anyone that needs clubs will have no trouble getting them for nothing from any golf club in the city. Remade balls are cheap, so that the initial expense will not be so great.

It has taken us ten years or more to get the public course, but the wait is worth while, for we get something very good and not an imitation. The chances are that the course will become so popular that before two or three years there will be a strong demand for more courses. Just to show how popular the links are at Chicago on one of the public courses more than 250,000 persons played there last year and during the summer months some of the players were there at dawn in order to be sure of playing. Many of the Chicagoans play before breakfast and instead of going to ball games on Saturday afternoons and Sunday there were hundreds who played golf instead.

* * *

Philadelphia Inquirer

January 31, 1915

A Municipal Golf Course

All who are golf enthusiasts will be interested to know that the work of preparing a municipal golf course is to be started in the spring and that a portion of this will be ready for players before the summer is over. The proposition has been agitated for some years, and while a majority of the members of the Fairmount Park Commission were friendly to the idea, its fulfillment has been postponed because of the difficulty of finding a suitable plot large enough for the purpose. The new Cobb's Creek Park has happily solved the problem, and it is there that the municipal golf grounds are to be located. The new course will have a playing length of 6400 yards, equal in that respect to the best in the country, and the soil will permit of the construction of thoroughly up-to-date links.

Philadelphia is the last of the big municipalities to afford free golf to the people. Chicago, Boston, Pittsburgh, New York and even Seattle built such courses some years ago. But, as if to atone for this delay, the municipal links in this city will not be excelled by any public golf grounds in the United States. The new grounds will be accessible from all parts of the city and within twenty minutes' ride of the City Hall. The charges will be nominal, so that those who have the desire to play the game, but have heretofore been deterred by reason of the cost or the impossibility of joining any one of the various clubs, will now find the handicap of expense removed. The fact that there are now nearly a million golfers in this country makes its followers inclined to call it, next to baseball, the national game, although we think some of our Scotch friends may be inclined to dispute this claim.

Those who are in a position to speak intelligently predict that the Cobb's Creek links will prove to be a great success. Indeed, 250,000 played on the municipal golf links in Chicago last year, which would indicate little doubt of the popularity of the Philadelphia links. There is a reason for the growing demand for golf. It is the ideal form of exercise for those who have reached or passed middle age, and it is the means of giving pure air and sunshine to thousands who would otherwise never think of going after those requisites.
