

Palatine Hills Golf Association

The History of PHGA

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A concise history of the development of Palatine Hills Golf Course that inspired the formation of the Palatine Hills Golf Association.

PHGA HISTORY

Foreword

To begin a history and formation of the Palatine Hills Golf Association, it is important to recreate as accurately as possible the vision, development and formation of the Palatine Hills Golf Course. Some of the records have been destroyed so memories needed to be relied on, but where records remain this shall reflect the beginning of the only eighteen hole course in the Village of Palatine. But we will find later on, that property that was purchased for the course, was not only not in the Village limits, but not within the limits of the Palatine Park District. So let us begin.

Vision for a course

In 1962 President Kennedy was in the oval office, the Cuban Missile crisis was averted and the Viet Nam conflict was heating up. The Detroit Lions upset the Green Bay Packers on Thanksgiving Day and the Bears were gearing up to win the NFL championship in 1963. In that year the Palatine Park District board, under the leadership of President Norman Gaare and Director William Milne, conceived the idea of building a district golf course and a search for property began in 1963. An open area of 125-150 acres was needed. The first property considered was on South Quentin Road in the vicinity of where Fremd High School and Hunting Ridge Elementary now stand. But the schools got there first. The second choice was the southeast corner of Quentin and Illinois Avenue where the housing development, Plum Grove Hills, now stands and the current Birchwood Park. The price for this area was prohibitive at the time and a third choice was needed.

Even in the 1960's a large open area was not readily available so the park district needed to be creative to obtain the needed property. There was an open area along Sayles Road (now Smith Road) and south of Dundee Road, but there was a challenge in purchasing this property. First of all, it was not within the confines of the Palatine Park District. This eliminated condemning the property and obtaining it through eminent domain procedures. The most serious challenge was that the needed acreage for the golf course and recreation area was owned by nine individual owners. These parcels ranged from 2.5 acres to 40 acres in size. So the park district contracted with well-known and respected Palatine township real estate agent, Roy LaLonde. Mr. LaLonde negotiated secretly with each owner to obtain purchase options until the general obligation bond referendum was passed in September 1965. All parcels were purchased except for the western part. (Two and a half acres of the Check property were purchased in 1975. For more detail, see Acquisition, Financing and Construction). This is the area next to the current practice range. This parcel was the location of the Check home that was accessed from Quentin Road via Echo Road. If the home were still there, it would have a perfect view of the "Nolan Castle" behind the third tee and third fairway.

Acquisition, Financing and Construction

[This section of the history was researched and written by Fred Hall who was the Assistant Palatine Park Director from 1965 to 1967 and Executive Director from 1971 until his retirement in 2002. He held office through most of the development of the course and had firsthand experience in its operation.]

As stated previously, Palatine Park District Commissioners and the District's first full-time Director William Milne began exploring the possibility of constructing an 18-hole championship golf course. Properties in the area of Fremd High School were the first choice of park officials, but it was determined that purchase options had already been granted by some of the owners and that the price of other properties in the area east of Quentin Road was prohibitive.

In 1964, the acquisition of land north of Northwest Highway, west of Staples Road (now Smith Road) and south of Dundee Road was explored. The Park District retained Edward Lawrence Packard, a highly regarded golf course architect, to determine preliminarily if the land was suitable for a golf course. Packard reported that the land would be suitable.

In early 1965, Commissioners Norman Gaare, Paul Jensen, Ralph Wiehrdt, Richard Wallace and Ralph Andrews and Director Milne retained former National Golf Foundation Director Rex McMorris to prepare a feasibility study to determine if the golf market would financially support a public golf course in the Palatine area. McMorris' study advised that conditions would support a new course. His projections for 25 years - the anticipated maturity of the revenue bonds to be sold to finance construction - were impressively accurate.

Following the McMorris study, the district retained the services of Palatine Real Estate Agent Roy Lalonde to obtain purchase options for nine parcels of land. The last names of the nine owners were Glaviano, Check, Hough, Lofgren, Gunderson, Kopach, Bondeson, Probst and King. The nine properties totaled about 120 acres. LaLonde's successful efforts in obtaining the purchase options were admirable. Because the properties were not within the corporate boundaries of the Park District, the use of eminent domain [condemnation] was not available. None of the owners knew that the Park District was the prospective purchaser and none knew of the proposed golf course construction. LaLonde reported that it appeared that none of the owners knew that their neighbors were also being approached with requests to sign option agreements. Subsequent purchases were accomplished for a portion of the Talbot property [the access road, the pond, and the recreation area on both sides of the access road]. Efforts also commenced to acquire the former railroad right-of way on the west side of the golf course.

Concurrent with the efforts of Packard, McMorris and LaLonde in 1964 and early 1965, park commissioners and Milne explored federal grant opportunities. Park District Attorney Roger Bjorvik was instrumental in the process. It was determined that the district was eligible for a Housing and Urban Development [HUD] grant that would reimburse the district for fifty percent of all open space acquisition costs. The

price of the 120 acres to be acquired from the nine owners averaged \$3,200 per acre for a total of \$384,000. The district applied for and received \$192,000 in reimbursements for HUD for the nine parcels. However, before any purchase options were to be exercised, park officials needed to obtain permission from the resident voters to proceed. A referendum was required.

The park district prepared the following referendum package to be submitted to the voters:

General Obligation Bond Issue – Debt to be repaid by all Park District taxpayers

- \$192,000, the district's share of the 120 acres for the golf course.
- The development of a recreation area south of the course.
- The construction of a second pool in Community Park.
- The purchase of ten acres for the first phase of Birchwood Park, including initial development of the park.
- The development of six neighborhood parks on land already owned by the district.

Revenue Bond Issue - Debt to be paid from revenues generated by the golf course

- \$475,000; Bonds to be paid off in fifty installments ending in 1991.

The voting residents approved the ballot questions pertaining to both the general obligation bond issue and the revenue bond issue in September 1965.

During the fall of 1965, park officials authorized the following actions relative to the golf course:

- Packard; prepare detailed golf course plans and specifications and bidding documents. Packard provided his first assessment that part of the course would have to be built in the flood plain.
- McMorris; update feasibility study and review with potential revenue bond buyers.
- LaLonde; prepare documents for exercising the nine purchase options.
- Bjorvik; prepare general obligation bond documents and follow HUD grant protocol.

General obligation bonds were sold, the purchase options were exercised and revenue bond houses were alerted to the sale of the revenue bonds. An exchange of land was accomplished with School District 15 so that the 15th fairway would feature a dog leg, rather than a 45 degree left turn. The previously described Talbot parcel was purchased which precluded the use of an ingress/egress easement just east of the current road.

During the first part of 1966, Packard's final plans and specifications were approved, bids for construction were received and a construction contract was executed with the Wadsworth Company. Revenue bonds were sold and rough grading began in March 1966. Course construction was completed with final seeding in the spring of 1967 and the course was opened prematurely in August 1967.

Interesting Side Lights

- The average cost per acre for all golf course and recreation area parcels: \$3,200. (This compares to the cost for the 10 acre Birchwood Park which was \$12,000 acre).
- All three parcels considered had possible flood areas.
- When the golf course architect, Larry Packard, was laying out the golf course, he needed additional property to complete the fifteenth fairway. This is the part of the fairway from Smith Road back to the dog leg. At that time School District 15 owned the property from the bus parking lot south to the northern part of the fifteenth fairway. So a swap was made for that property and the school district received property where the Sundling Junior High running track is now located.
- The golf course property becomes part of the park district in 1975.
- The southern half of the property became part of Village of Palatine in the late 1970's and the rest in 1990.
- The pond along the fifth fairway was originally part of the golf course, but was purchased by the homeowners association on the west side of the pond so that home owners could use the west shore line.
- In July 1973 the course had its first major flood. During a Park District meeting park commissioner Bob Dellamaria asked, "When are you going to do something about the flooding?" The commissioner was reminded of a comment made by Larry Packard, course architect, who said earlier when asked about the possible flood situation, "It's only going to get worse!"
- The architectural firm, Edward Lawrence Packard, was the course designer for Palatine Hills.
- The golf course construction firm, Wadsworth Company, began construction in the spring of 1966.
- The course opened in 1967. There were cost containment measures taken, the most significant was the elimination of the sand bunkers on holes 3, 5, 12, 13, and 15. These remain grass bunkers.

Palatine Hills Senior Staffing:

Head Professional:	Charlie Barnard	1967-1968
	Vacant	1969-1992
	Dan Hotchkin	1995-current
Superintendent:	Walter Simon	1966-68
	Bill Miller	1968-1973
	Frank Krueger	1974-1991
	Brad Helms	1991-current
Course Manager:	Ralph Lonergan	1968-1986 (part time position)
	Ron Gbur	1986-1990
	Raul Zaldivar	1991-2014
Executive Director:	William Milne	1962-1966
	Henry Diehl	1967-1968
	Rex McMorris	1968-1971
	Fred Hall	1971-2002
	Ron Ghur	2002-2011
	Mike Clark	2011-current

Formation of the Palatine Hills Men's Golf Association

In the spring of 1970 Jim Takahashi along with several other regular golfers at Palatine Hills appeared at a Park District commissioners meeting asking approval to form a golf association. Approval was given and the association was founded with 43 charter members. Jim served as president for the first three years. By-laws were written and accepted by members in the summer of 1970 and amended in 1978 to allow women and the name was change to Palatine Hills Golf Association. They were reorganized in 1998 to allow for additional directors and the process for elections. Again in 2015 the by-laws were reorganized to reflect

current communication procedures and to include two non-elected directors, Park Board Liaison and Historian/Librarian.

As reflected from the above senior staff positions, there was not a PGA professional for most of the formative years. During these early years, the course was managed by a part-time manager. This left a void at the course for the organization of events and competitive play. This vacuum was filled by the newly organized and energetic PHGA. The association would run the club championship, junior golf tournament, and many other events. During this time while running the junior tourney one of the competitors was Gary Hallberg, a winner of three titles on the PGA tour and a current player on the championship tour with one tournament victory. He held the course record for many years with a 66 on the championship course shot while he was a member of the Barrington High School golf team.

After Ron Gbur was named the full-time course manager, the administration of the club championship and junior tournament were assumed by the Palatine Hills staff. In return there was a tacit agreement between the course and the PHGA that the PHGA two-ball tournament would be held the week-end after Labor Day and before the fall aeration, and the PHGA would support the club championship. This agreement has been beneficial to both parties.

Weekend competitions were held for association members, but only one game for the weekend, not like the separate games for Saturday and Sunday as currently played. The holiday events began in 1970.

Scoring for these events was all done manually on pairing sheets to determine the winners of the skin and team events. The weekend games were scored manually as well with each board member on a rotating basis assuming the scoring responsibility. At times the posting of results could take up to two weeks or more. Envelopes with the players' winnings would be placed in the "coffee can" in the clubhouse where members would pick them up.

Computer Applications

In 1979 when the association's founder, Jim Takahashi, volunteered to develop computer applications to do the scoring and the allocation of the payouts, results would then be posted the following week. As the membership was increasing, separate competitions were held on Saturday and Sunday. In 1984, the association voted to use only scores that were posted in association sanctioned events. This was facilitated with the computerization of the scoring function. Previously, members were required to pay for the handicap service that the golf course used and post their own scores. Scores from non-association play were also included in these handicaps. This change was most successful in minimizing handicap disputes.

After the passing of Jim Takahashi, the computer applications continued to be enhanced and expanded. The major part of this work is credited to Rick Hapanowicz and Darrell Gilstrap.

Additional Play

In 1992, with more members retiring and membership increasing as well, the association scheduled competitive play on Thursday mornings. This has become very popular and allows members additional opportunities to qualify for the Takahashi Classic.

During the season from May to August a monthly travel event was scheduled on area courses from southern Wisconsin to lower Cook County. These started on an ad hoc basis with 10 to 16 players. In the late 1980's these events were available to the entire membership and have been held every year to the current time. Jim Nolan was the charter chairman of this event for many years. Bob Bem assumed the chair from Nolan and has continued the tradition of running wonderful events away from the association's home course.

The Banquets

From 1970 to 1978, an annual association banquet was held following the end of the season for its members and spouses. Starting in 1979 the banquet was held Saturday night of the two-ball championship, now the Takahashi Classic. These evenings would include a cocktail reception, dinner and dancing. Annual awards were also presented. The venue for these gala events included the old Howard Johnson, the old Hob Nob, the old Millrose Brewery, the old Watercress Banquet Hall, Hackneys, Fritzl's and the Schaumburg Golf Course.

These were quite popular, but interest in continuing these banquets was voted down by the board in 2000. It was replaced by the Awards Dinner following completion of play of the two-ball. These dinners were part of the two-ball entry fee package.

PHGA Donations

The Association throughout the years has made several donations to the golf course as listed below:

- Memorial Flag Pole and Monument on the front lawn of the clubhouse (Chair Ernie Rubak).
- Water Aerator on the seventh hole – the course's signature hole.
- PH (Palatine Hills) shrubbery planting just right of the eighteenth green (Chairs Larry Niemczyk and Bob Mathieson).
- Memorial trees planted at numerous locations.
- The Takahashi Memorial Garden located near the first tee (Chair Jim Nolan).
- PHGA Member Memorial Brick Walk (Chair Larry Niemczyk). Since its inception in 2011, forty-

six bricks have been laid with the names of deceased PHGA members. Additional bricks are added each year during the Memorial Day Event.

Epilogue

The Palatine Hills Golf Association is recognized as the premier public golf course association in the state. The administration of the golf competition, supported by its scoring and handicap systems, provides comprehensive support to its members. The communication to association members is most effective with its self-designed web-site. In 1998 the association received a citation from the Illinois Parks and Recreation Association for its outstanding contributions to the community and the game of golf. The success of the association can be attributed to the cooperation and support of the Palatine Park District, Palatine Hills Golf Course, and the volunteer work of the PHGA officers, board members and the participation of its members.

And above all, the PHGA success continues to benefit from the foresight, vision and spirit of the founding father, Jim Takahashi, who based the formation of the association upon good sportsmanship, fellowship, character and best interests of the game.

Addenda

History of the PHGA Takahashi Classic

The two-ball tourney dates back to 1979. It was first named the Italian Stallion after an incident that occurred at the annual PHGA banquet following the final permanent tee time.

With the influence of the cocktail hour and dinner, a boastful discussion developed that resulted in a Calcutta event with players and wives bidding on two-man teams on how they would finish on the second day of competition. Jim Nolan and Tim Sowinski took charge and were the auctioneers and bidding went past most players' budget and playing abilities. In fact, Tony Pistorio and his wife were very aggressive bidders as they drove up the price of the Pistorio/Takahashi team as both of them were bidding against each other for ownership of the team. Tony finally out bid his wife and won the team. Consequently, the competition was called the Italian Stallion for the next four years. The format for the next four years was a two-man team competition based on total net score with the pot being funded with a Calcutta. The bidding was held in Johnny Dempster's basement located in Winston Park the first two years and the final two years of the Calcutta era at the old Palatine Hills clubhouse.

Then in 1983, a new format for the competition was developed by Jim Takahashi to the delight of the Park District and the competitors as it eliminated the late Friday night Calcutta bidding. The new format included two competitions with the low two-man, total net score, which determines the two man championship and a supplemental competition that allows the formation of additional two man teams for an additional fee per team. This supplemental competition is scored on the basis of a better ball format. Scoring for the event was made possible by Jim Takahashi as he developed programs to score the competition via computer applications. Jim Nolan assisted with running the tourney and over the years Carl Kaminsky, Larry Niemczyk, John Helpap and Jane Mikuta were added to the committee.

In 1992, as the number of competitors and supplemental teams increased, the supplemental competition was formulated into three flights to increase the competition and to spread out the payout among more players.

The PHGA Two-Ball tourney was renamed the Takahashi Classic in 2004 to memorialize "Jimmy T" for being the founder of the association and past president (1970-1972) and for his contributions to the Palatine Park District, his well decorated World War II service and his valuable contributions to the association. Jim was a volunteer member of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team that consisted of Japanese Americans. This unit was involved in five major European battle campaigns during the war.

The tourney administration was enhanced with the work of Rick Hapanowicz as he rewrote the entry and scoring programs to make the process more efficient. Each year Rick continues to make improvements to the scoring process which makes the Takahashi Classic the highlight of the PHGA season.

The Classic committee is defined as follows for 2016:

Classic Chairman:	Current president, Bill Horton
Awards Dinner Chairman:	Past president, Jim Romanek
Finance Chairman:	Treasurer, Joe Saccomanno
Smoker (Supplemental entries and Pairings) Chairman:	Jim Toth

Additional assistance is appointed as needed.

Rubak Pool (Losers' Pool)

The Rubak Pool for the second day of competition of the Takahashi Classic was named in the honor of Ernie Rubak, a long time member, past president (1994) and a significant contributor to PHGA in its formative years. Ernie was also a well decorated World War II veteran.

Years back and prior to the days of e-mail, no one knew the Saturday results until they were posted at the Saturday night banquet by the tourney chairman, Jim Takahashi. It was a husband and wife affair with giant Mum plants given to the ladies as a thank you for allowing us to play golf on the weekends. Once the results were known, Ernie would collect the \$10.00 from every team except from the two-man team or teams who were in first place. That then became the “losers’ pool” for the Sunday play only. Today we simply add the fee into the tourney’s entry fee.

In 1973 a permanent tee time was formed with Ernie, Jerry Senesac, Sr.; Jack O’Connell and current member, Jerry Senesac, Jr. Jerry, Jr. still plays in a permanent time with three other long time members.

In the first years of the association, a program and calendar was printed before the season with the information that is now available on the web site. Ernie was a commercial artist and would design and prepare the layout for the handout. It was then printed by Ernie Percelli (past president 1975) who was in the printing business.

Over the years Ernie served on the board and was president in 1994. Ernie will always be remembered for his robust laugh, for being the unofficial director of the PHGA Chorale Society, and most of all, for initiating the Losers’ Pool and making the second day of the two-ball tourney a “second chance” event.

Ernie died in 2003 and his memorial tree is planned between the third green and fourth tee along with trees for his playing partners, Jerry Senesac, Sr. and Jack O’Connell.



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