

Club marks 90th anniversary

Famous and not-so-famous alike frequent Worthington links

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WORTHINGTON — The way the Worthington Golf Club is situated along the side of a steep hill, it appears just about ready to slide off the face of the earth.

Regulars admit the sloping course can be fairly difficult, but that challenge along with panoramic views and the camaraderie of its members have made it a popular spot for area golfers for the past 90 years.

"We're one big happy family," Sue Fisk, a board member, said.

The family will mark the Worthington Golf Club's 90th anniversary with a dinner and dance on Saturday starting at 5:30 to honor the 13 club presidents who are living. In addition, the finals for the club championship will be held Sunday.

George Bartlett, a long-time member, said the club was founded by four summer residents in 1904, when Worthington was in its heyday as a resort community. He said the group put in three holes and the greens were mowed by horses.

Now the nine-hole course stretches over 88 acres, and at 1,700 feet, it is the highest golf course in the state. Bartlett said its elevation helps keep it cool during the summers and offers a good view of the Hampshire hills to the east.

There is also a clubhouse, site of the former Bates farm, which has a pro shop, locker rooms, a bar and restaurant called Mac-Mulligans. Fisk said the club is an active social center where people play, stop for a meal, then return to play golf early the next morning.

The club draws its 200 or so members from the Hilltowns and nearby cities. Cullen Packard, a

long-time member who started working as a caddy when he was only 6, said because the club is member-owned, the fees to play have been kept low purposely so area people can afford to play. "They want the local people to be involved in it," he said.

Regulars said the course has also attracted its share of celebrities including author E.L. Doctorow, who used to have a home here; Daniel Okrent, managing editor of *Life* magazine; and National Security Adviser Anthony Lake.

George Schultz, a part-time Cummington resident, used to bring a small army of Secret Service agents when he was secretary of state. Now Schultz comes alone to play when he visits the area.

One of the course's most celebrated events were back-to-back holes-in-one by golfing partners George Torrey and Arthur Rolland in 1976. The moment was noted in the column, *Ripley's Believe It Or Not*.

Fisk said members are a dedicated group who like to

donate furnishings and plants to beautify the clubhouse and grounds. She said members rely on committees to oversee the club's operation. "You just don't go out and play golf," she said.

Packard said while the club is well-known for its manicured greens, there is also a touch of the wilderness here with sightings of bear, deer and fox. He said during the past week a wild turkey has been seen regularly on the first fairway where it comes to feast on wild blueberries.



GAZETTE FILE PHOTO

The Worthington Golf Club, formed in 1904, originally had a three-hole course and was mowed by horses. The club celebrates 90 years on Saturday with a dinner and dance.