

An Account of Various Types of Minigolf Courses: A Significant Facet of the Sport

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Abstract

Miniature or Mini Golf, as the name suggests is simply a miniaturized version of regular golf which is played using a putter and a golf ball. The minigolf courses are an important aspect of the game. Various types of minigolf courses are used for playing the game. Miniature minigolf course, felt minigolf course, concrete minigolf course and Minigolf standard open course are generally established for playing the game. Each have their own characteristic feature. The present study highlights the characteristic features of these various types of minigolf courses.

Key words : Minigolf, Courses, Miniature, Felt, Concrete, Cost

Introduction

The game of golf is believed to have originated from a game played by the people of Scotland during the 15th century. The game consisted of hitting a stone instead of a ball with a stick. After 1750, the game developed into the sport of Golf in a form which is still recognized and played in present times. It was in 1774 that Edinburgh golfers framed the standardized rules for the sport. Miniature or Mini Golf, as the name suggests is simply a miniaturized version of regular golf. The game is not a recent invention but find its origin in much earlier times. It is very interesting to note that it was women who invented the game in 1867. The reason behind inventing the game were men and male dominated society with chauvinist characteristics. Raising a club or a stick above the shoulders was considered to be uncivilized for women. In order to overcome such criticism and at the same time to enjoy the game, women developed the miniature form of golf which is called as Mini golf. During these times the game was very different in its form as it is played in current times. The games consisted of everything that a full sized game did, but only on a smaller scale. They had fairways, greens, sand and water traps, even trees to get in the way. It was designed in a way which closely resembled the popular men's golf.

Today Mini golf is a game enjoyed by people of all ages. It uses artificial structures such as carpet and concrete, and obstacles such as tunnels,

ramps, windmills, concrete and metal walls and many more which make it a very interesting sport. Minigolf is played with ball and putter on a minigolf course. The aim is to get the ball from the teeing-off area to the defined target in as few strokes as possible. The winner is the player with the lowest total score. A minigolf course has 18 clearly marked lanes which are numbered. Players must complete each hole in number order without skipping any hole. Minigolf is a game conducted in accord with the rules and regulation of the World Minigolf Sports Federation, Minigolf Federation of India and the minigolf Technical Committee rules. Every player should complete the game through the first to the eighteenth fairway and the final outcome is determined by a total stroke count in. In case the player does not complete the game on any one fairway or discontinue playing his result is not counted.

Although Minigolf is a smaller version of its parent golf game, various factors contribute to the level of the game being played. The most significant factors are technique, training and the type of minigolf courses.

Types of Minigolf Courses

There are four types of tournament Minigolf courses recognised by the World Minigolf Sport Federation (WMF): Miniaturegolf course, Feltgolf course, Concrete course and Minigolf Open Standard (MOS) course. Players use putters designed for the needs of minigolfers as well as special Minigolf balls mostly made of rubber and designed with

competition players in mind, allowing them to find the best hole in single shot. The various types of Minigolf courses which are utilized for playing the game are as follows-^{1,2,3}

Miniature Minigolf Course-

The most common used and approved tournament minigolf courses in the world are miniaturegolf courses. These courses are mostly made from fibre cement. These courses require less space and a complete tournament course of 18 holes could be built in 600-800 m². They are 6.25 m in length and have a width of about 0.9 m. In order to set up the course, 28 different types of holes can be selected. These courses are developed in many cities and holiday sites all over the world. They are very popular and even though the holes are quite short, the difficulty level is much higher. The miniature golf courses require some maintenance in early spring after the winter. Players are not allowed to stand on these courses while playing.

Felt Minigolf Course-

Sweden and Finland are known for their felt courses. The surface is made of felt and the borders are made of wood. This type of course can be quite difficult as some holes are much longer than the miniaturegolf holes. Nowadays this type of course has grown all over Europe and it has become quite popular to play on felt. The felt courses require more space, a typical area 1000-1500 m². The length of the course is 7-18 m and the width is about 0.8-0.9 m. There could be some variation as the total length should be at least 180 metres, while the longest courses are well above 200 metres in length. They can also be planned around the landscape and area. Holes can be selected from almost 40 different types, even though all of these are not used for competition, the producer can inform which holes are approved for tournaments. There are international tournaments played almost every year on felt courses as they are becoming more and more popular. Players are allowed to stand on these courses while playing, but walking on the lanes should be avoided as it risks that it brings dirt or small stones onto the course.

Concrete Minigolf Course-

The third type of course is concrete. These courses were constructed in the 1950's by Paul Bongni from Switzerland. Therefore, this type is predominantly found in Switzerland, Austria and southern Germany, but concrete courses are also

found all over the Europe. There are only 18 types of obstacles and these have the same number on every course. The courses are constructed in concrete and the borders around them are made of steel. It is quite expensive to build and requires more space than felt courses. The length of the lanes is 10-12 metres, the longest being about 20-25 metres. Even though it is expensive to build, it is very attractive to play and courses often have large clubs and many casual players. Players are also allowed to stand on these lanes and it is necessary to be in the right position while hitting the ball. Walking on the lanes is not allowed.

Minigolf Open Standard Course-

Are those built with a surface of artificial grass and are most common in North America and Great Britain. Minigolf Open Standard (MOS) courses are also commonly known as Adventure Golf and Crazy Golf. This type of tournament course was officially approved by the WMF in 2007, in order to strengthen the position of the WMF and to spread the minigolf movement all around the world. This new section allows all member nations of the WMF to develop under general basic conditions and rule their "own" MOS courses with individual (non-standardized) lanes. This open strategy of the WMF allows each member nation to approve existing courses for national tournaments and international sport events by its own decision in the name of the WMF. The size and shape of the lanes are quite different from miniaturegolf, feltgolf and concrete courses.

As MOS courses contain many different hazards to the other three approved course type, specific rules are either published in a course rule book, which is available at the course for all players, or explained to all players before tournament play begins. New types of courses with different materials used for the surface, frames and obstacles, and different sizes of the lanes are covered by the category of MOS. New MOS courses are being built in a lot of the newly WMF registered national associations and are going to be produced for national promotion of minigolf in these countries. Even when these courses look like small editions of golf holes, minigolf, including MOS, is a separate worldwide sport acknowledged by Sport Accord and by the International Golf Federation.

ESTABLISHING A MINIGOLF COURSE

The game of Minigolf is gaining popularity day by day and people around the globe are seeing it as a remarkable business idea with immense profits. However, the biggest concern in this regard is the cost associated with the establishment of a Minigolf course. It is estimated that in order to design and build a 18 hole concrete minigolf course, an investment of about 150,000 to 500,000 USD is required. In India, this cost varies between 15 to 30 lac rupees for a 9 hole course. This is an approximate amount and the cost depends on many other factors such as the size of the minigolf course, location, number of water features, topography, lighting, landscaping, themed scenes or elements and obstacles, type of putting turf, type of golf hole edging, unusual soil conditions, prevailing wage or union wage requirements, distance traveled for mobilization, related expenses such as housing, and other crew expenses, the amount of work, if any, to be done by the owner, such as grading, landscape, and lighting.⁴

Conclusion

In the past few decades the popularity of Minigolf has increased throughout the globe including India. The cost associated with the

establishment of minigolf courses has hindered its rate of progress in developing countries like India. It is still considered as a business idea with handsome profits. Therefore with proper planning, policies and efforts of both the people and the government, the game of Minigolf can be made an employment opportunity along with leisure and sports activity.

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