The Royal Colombo Golf Club

Posted on

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George Houghton in one of his inimitable books on the lighter side of golf gives this interesting description of how one is addicted to the sport. “Assuming that you have never experienced the surprise, the sublime satisfaction of a well-hit number two

iron shot, may I say there is in store for you a sensation of supreme joy unequalled in any walk of non-golfing life. “At that ecstatic second, when your flashing dubhead kisses the ball, the golf drug cakes full possession. You have hit a snorter. The sensation dazes yo1,1 with wonder. like a rose in the sun. your unknown vitals suddenly burst into glowing life.

“In a flash you have become an addict.”

The addiction to golf is obviously fast growing in Colombo, to judge from the golf talk in the city’s many clubs, and the absence of many an important executive from office in the morning. On Sunday mornings, when people used to answer the telephone with a gruff hello, the message now is that he or she (or master or mistress) has gone to the golf course. The golf course is the Royal Colombo Golf Club situated on a quiet fringe of the city and fast gaining recognition as one of the finest, and most enjoyable, courses in this part of the world. Whatever your handicap, you will find a happy and exciting discovery in Colombo. Don’t be surprised at the many who have already made this discovery. Ask your hotel to call you early and the question will come: “Is it golf, sir/madam? We can arrange transport to the course.” The early morning round of golf has definitely caught on in Colombo, with its own residents and visitors, too. The course of the Royal Colombo Golf Club (RCGC) is a special invitation in the mornings -with bird songs around, the dew fresh on the greens and fairv.rays, the light just right, you can tee off to a good day. Don’t be bothered by the hoot of an approaching train. It is not a deliberate hazard of the course, but hazard it is. A quaint hazard at that. Almost the only place where a slow train chugs along on the fringe of the course, carrying its daily load of commuters to work. It is a very slow train, the Kelani Valley train of Sri Lanka, running on narrow gauge, which is a different story. But it certainly adds to the drama and excitement of the Colombo Golf Course.

The Royal Colombo Golf Club, one of the oldest golfing clubs outside the United Kingdom, is also one of the oldest of sporting clubs in Sri I.anka. Along with the stream of British organisation in the old empire came the introduction of their favourite sports, and golf came to Ceylon (as Sri I.anka was known then) in 1879, with the establishing of the Colombo Golf Club, soon to change its name to the Royal Colombo Golf Club.



The hazards and fairways at the Colombo Golf Course.

As in so many other British-brought sports in Sri Lanka, Galle Face was the birthplace, cradle and nursery of golf on the island. As the game drew more enthusiasts and Galle Face suffered encroachments and grew into a public promenade, the Golf Club was shifted to its present site on Model Farm Road, which at the time was largely a preserve of the European community with just a sprinkling of Ceylonese-a matter which has changed for the better today, with players both Sri Lankan and foreign in generous proportions using the course. 1be Sri Lankans are in the main the regular members of the Club, while a large number of foreigners are those on short business visits, expatriate employees or tourists on short holiday.

The RCGC’S 18-hole course has won the plaudits of many a professional and seasoned amateur for the excellence of its trees, fairways, roughs and greens. The softly undulating terrain of the course, with its many shade trees, has won exceptional comment and is part of the memories that golfers take with them from Colombo.

Many a golfer has found the hazards at the RCGC tantalizing and tempting. The water hazards are specially challenging, and often defeat even the most tried player.

The 18-hole course with four-and-a-half miles of walkway, takes two-and-a-half to three hours to complete. The large pool of water by the No. 1 hole is always a hazard to the opening golfer, with the excitement of a ball lopped in water.

No. 3 tee has a special hazard of its own. One needs skill here not to play out of bounds, for if one does, the ball will land with a loud tinny noise on a zinc roof of a nearby house. But there is little annoyance for the neighbourhood is used to the ways of inexperienced golfers. The ball can be retrieved for a smile and a little token of thanks.

For those looking for a hole-in-one, there are four distinct possibilities here. You could always attempt it this is despite the excellent facilities provided.

A non-member or guest could enjoy a whole day’s golf at the RCGC, from 36 to 72 holes if the will is there, for a Green Fee of Rs. 400 on week-days and Rs. 500 on weekends. You can bet it is not only this unbelievably low fee that tempts many visitors to spend a whole day at golf at the RCGC’s course.

There are other advantages too: the caddies. Some of them are of international class, professionals who play in international tournaments. ‘They all speak English; some more than a smattering of French and German, and some speak Japanese too. ‘They are willing and obliging caddies who will help you along and tell you some good golfing stories.

The RCGC’s Pro Shop has a wide range of clubs, both irons and woods, balls and all other accessories, at unbelievably reasonable prices, which means you can forget your golf-bag and still enjoy a good game of golf in the tropical sun and lovely green of Colombo.

While the not-so-experienced golfer can always obtain the help of more skilled players and good caddies, or even the services of the RCGC’s professional trainer, those more experienced should not underestimate the skill of Sri Lankan players. 1be country, and this Club, boasts of some very competent players, both men and women, who have won trophies in several Asian and international tournaments. So

the challenges here are always exciting and the matches keen.

Not the least of the attractions of the RCGC is its restaurant, which is a spacious, airy clubhouse serving long, cool thirst-quenchers, fruit drinks, cool lemonade and beer, and good strong spirits too. The cuisine served is both Western and Eastern prepared by good country cooks and served in the most clean and inviting surroundings.

The washrooms provide running hot water to help relax after a hard game, and parking can never be a problem in this tuck-away city fringe location.

So whenever you feel like a hole-in-one, or would settle down to a bogie, birdie or eagle, you can be sure of finding an exciting opportunity at the Royal Colombo Golf Club. There are many who spend a whole vacation enjoying the course and its 18 holes. Your hotel or travel agent can make all the arrangements. Or call the Club at 595431 or 91401. 1be address is Model Farm Road, Colombo 8. Cables: “Crowflies.”