



Contributed

A golfer tees off on the 16th, known as the "Splash Hole," which had the tee box set on pier-like stilts. It was removed during renovation in 1928.

100 YEARS YOUNG

Recreation Park Golf Course celebrates a century of tradition and modern convenience

By **Bob Keisser** Staff Writer

It's older than Augusta, a public course just like The Old Course at St. Andrews, and its Splash Hole once was as iconic a feature as The Lone Cypress at Pebble Beach.

It's Long Beach's Recreation Park Golf Course, and it is officially 100 years old today, and whatever it lacks in celebrity by today's standards it more than makes up in with a century of tradition and modern convenience.

At an age when most public courses have been gutted and remade in someone else's vision or forced to simply make way for development and the myth that newer is better, Rec Park has persevered because it offers things other courses do not: It is in great shape 365 days a year, a sporting par 72, a course that plays quick, and inexpensive.

It's a popular combination. The Rec Park averages 120,000 rounds a year — its peak was 137,000 in 1992 — which puts it in the top five public



Diandra Jay Staff Photographer

Rec Park is among the top 5 most-played public courses in the country.

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"Recreation Park was ahead of its time," Bob Livingston, the Golf Director for the city, said this week from

the Parks, Recreation and Marine Department offices near El Dorado. "It was unique when it opened, has always been popular and it's adapted

over the years.

"It's a place that doesn't require you to have the most technological clubs, has made the fivesome work and doesn't tolerate slow play. And as anyone who has played there will tell you, it's a great price."

Rec Park is where golf icons Ben Hogan and Byron Nelson helped bring the Southern California PGA championship to Rec for almost three decades, where local icons Marty and Del Walker held court, where Wilson High School called its home course, and where virtually every golfer of note to come out of Long Beach spent some of his or her youth.

When the course opened on April 30, 1910 (estimated cost, \$3 million), it was just nine holes with a lake over 116 acres operated by the Virginia Country Club, purchased as an added attraction to the adjacent and ritzy Virginia Hotel owned by Col. Charles

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