

THE GEOGRAPHY OF GOLF IN WEST CENTRAL ILLINOIS:
AN ANALYSIS OF SPORT IN THE RURAL ENVIRONMENT

An Abstract of
A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of Geography
Western Illinois University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
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November 1976

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ABSTRACT

The few geographers that have concerned themselves with the study of golf activity have approached the subject from an urban perspective rather than assessing its impact from the rural point of view. The study analyzes the spatial distribution of golf facility development in a nine county area of West Central Illinois by hypothesizing that facilities are small scale and less specialized because of dispersed patterns of population. A per capita production measurement was utilized to appraise golf development, while a questionnaire survey of the region's 23 facilities resulted in a rural golf profile. Golf potential and availability surfaces were created to determine possible demand for additional development and expansion of golf in the region. The region is characterized by 9-hole facilities which operate on marginal operational budgets to overcome income losses from extremely low volumes of play. Golf potential and availability have been found to occur within "Public" and "Private" spheres of influence. The former is dominated by small scale activity in rural service centers and the latter by large scale private activity in the region's urban centers. Analysis of the availability surfaces indicated a demand for public golf development and expansion primarily in portions of the region not presently served by a facility.