

PAT MARKOVICH

The Creator of Richmond Golf Club

By Robert Fuller with assistance from:

RCC GM Ron Svien, Rick Jetter & Paul Wilcox



It's 1938, the country was still in a deep recession. In Richmond there is a struggling Golf Club known as the Carquinez Golf Club. It's manager and head professional, Ed Sawyer, has been found dead of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. He had been pouring his own money into Carquinez CC and had run out of cash. There were less than 40 members. The course had been redesigned to the present configuration in the early 30s, but was in poor condition and still lacked the necessary water for proper irrigation. The few existing members reached out to Pat Markovich who was well known on the West coast as an excellent golfer and a member of the PGA. Would he be interested in taking over the Carquinez GC as manager and head professional? Why would anyone leave a secure job at San Francisco Golf Club to move to Richmond to a very uncertain future?

But, Pat saw his future as more than a head pro at a prestigious golf course. He wanted to create and build golf courses. In the thirties Richmond was a rural town of almost 25,000. The Ford Plant now known as the Craneway Complex was no longer producing many automobiles due to lack of demand during the depression. Chevron then Standard Oil was a smaller complex at the present site. Jobs were scarce and who had money for golf? The golf course property was owned by the Atlas Power Company and leased to the Club members. Pat saw a future for golf in Richmond.

Pat Markovich grew up in Oakland and played golf on the local courses. During this time, he became friends with local golfers including future US Open Champion, Ken Venturi. Pat played many local tournaments including the Crosby Pro-Am. Later he would use these friends to promote the Richmond Golf Club.

The Carquinez Golf Club was a semi-private club meaning if you weren't a member a round of golf could be played for 5 cents. There was a small Board of Directors, but Pat ran the club. The club was not an immediate success. Pat had to work nights in the ship yards and come to work at the golf course when his shift was over. For extra revenue, Pat created a temporary housing site for the Army and shipyard workers in what is now the former pool area and had slot machines in the bar (pictured below). He drilled a well somewhere on the property to help with the intermittent irrigation system. Irrigation was done by hand with long hoses and was a continuing problem at the renamed Richmond Golf Club. Even with every effort made to save the course Pat had to ask the existing members for a \$9,000 bail out to keep the doors open. The members who funded the loan and

became equity members of the operating lease of the new Club. He then settled the Clubs debts for 10 cents on the dollar.

In 1938 there was no Richmond Bridge, no Richmond Parkway, or easy way to even drive to the Club. His first step was the change the name of the Carquinez Golf Club to Richmond Golf Club. The city of Richmond was beginning to grow rapidly by 1939. Pat believed the Club would enjoy more support from the now thriving downtown merchants if it was called Richmond GC.



To build the new Richmond Golf Club "BRAND". He created the "Richmond Open" in 1938. The tournament brought many well-known local golfers to the Club each year. Local business men put up the prize money and Pat took care of the publicity. Many of Pat's old buddies from San Francisco came to play in his tournament. Ken Venturi won three times. Membership finally began to grow. Pat saw the future "promote, promote and promote" Pat allowed any high school or college student to use and practice at RGC. He also began to promote women's golf. He was good friends with Babe Didrikson Zaharias A well-known lady golfer who would go on to win many professional titles. She came out to RGC and played exhibition rounds with Pat. Although Pat was a scratch golfer, he noted that if you didn't quite hit your drive, Babe would hit it by you.



At that time, there were no major league sports in the Bay Area, no television and no internet. Newspaper stories were the main source of information and promotion of sporting events. Pat began to promote RGC by creating a constant supply of news stories featuring his Club. He did whatever it took to catch the eye of the sports reporters. He even held a night tournament. He held tournaments to raise money for many charities including "The March of Dimes". Our teaching pro, Joe Vavra, was a March of Dimes winner. These events were all covered by local sports writers. As the crowds grew for local tournaments, Pat saw a chance to put his Club on the map. He used his friends in the PGA to hold a true pro golf tournament at Richmond Golf Club. Members and local businesses raised almost \$7,000 for prize money. Sam Snead won the first PGA tournament at Richmond Golf Club. Three more PGA tournaments followed. Each one attracted more spectators and more prize money for the winners and more revenue and recognition for RGC. The revenue from these tournaments was used to build what is the main

part of the RCC clubhouse. There was even a plan to hold the "PGA Championship" at RGC. Unfortunately, a dispute arose between Pat and Fred Corcoran, PGA Tour tournament manager, about African American golfers playing in a PGA event. Corcoran demanded Pat go out on the course and remove the black players. Pat refused and the PGA did not hold any more tournaments at Richmond.

Pat then saw opportunities in women's golf to promote the Richmond brand. He encouraged the women members to form a woman's association. He arranged for a local radio station to have two woman members host a golf program. Pat also set up LPGA tournaments in 1951, 1952 and 1955. The tournaments were avidly followed by local newspaper writers who received free meals and golf while covering events. Membership continued to grow and the Club had an operational surplus.



Toward the end of the fifties the Board of Directors took more control of the Club. The Board of Directors hired a General Manager to run the day to day Club business. Pat still ran the Pro Shop and clubhouse as an independent business. Internal conflicts developed between Pat and the General Manager who also served on the Board of Directors. In addition, the Richmond Golf Club property was only leased to the members. First from the Atlas Powder Company and then from Bethlehem Steel. Bethlehem wanted to build a new plant on the property and there was concern about the future of the golf club. The golf industry was growing and Pat started to look for new opportunities.



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PAT MARKOVICH

Your Board of Directors has reluctantly accepted the resignation of Pat Markovich, effective August 15, after 23 years service as General Manager. This club as it stands today is a monument of his achievements. In taking over, he had a Club deeply in debt, with conditions of course and clubhouse very poor. Its complete collapse was avoided by a group of ten member sponsors assembled by him and he as one of them. Under this special financial help and management it survived the war years and in ten years of existence put the Club on its way.

In the succeeding ten years to this date, development and capital improvements have been continuous to where the course is wonderful; a fine, greatly expanded clubhouse and pro-shop is there; a swimming pool with surrounding area and landscaping extending around extensive parking facilities; full membership and financial position good. It has been hard work, planning, long hours, vision, leadership to give the membership all it has benefited and enjoyed through the years.

The extreme gratitude of the Club is therefore expressed to him. The same feeling of "Thank you" and very best wishes for good health, success, happiness for the future is extended from the employees, staff, his countless friends in the membership of the Club.

In April of 1953 Pat and several other investors from Richmond bought the Maxwell estate located on the Silverado Trail for \$350,000. Markovich hired Ben Harmon to design a golf course to be called the Silverado Country Club. Overnight cabins were built surrounding the golf course similar to country clubs then being built in the Palm Desert area. Pat had to spend considerable time away from Richmond working on the Silverado layout. In 1962 Pat decided the uncertainty related to the future use of property by the Steel Company made it impossible to continue working at Richmond. On July 25, 1962, he sent his resignation letter to the Board of Directors. After nearly 24 years under Pat's leadership the Club had an operational surplus of \$183,000, over 300 members, a new pro shop, improved and enlarged club house and an olympic size swimming pool (pictured above). He created the Richmond Country Club as we know it today. In 2018, Pat was voted into the Northern California PGA Hall of Fame. The following are some of his accomplishments:

President NCPGA: 1948-1949

Pro-President Champion: 1949

NCPGA Stroke Play Champion: 1952

NCPGA Golf Pro of the Year: 1955

President NCPGA Senior Association: 1961

NCPGA Senior Stroke Play Champion 1961, 1963 & 1966