



PHOTOGRAPHY: ADAM BARNES

After retirement, Don Payne took up real golf but prefers playing the mini version on the course in his backyard.

feet, with some of the fairways 40 feet long. "Most of my fairways are 2 feet wide, but one is just a foot wide with no rails," he says. "You have to hit the ball straight and accurately, or it's going to roll off."

Don added other devilishly difficult details. "I kind of tinkered with it and built some sand traps and one with a little water hazard," he says. Strategically placed, some removable boards change the ball's trajectory, adding versatility to the course. "I only have six holes, but I have it fixed in such a way that you can play as if you have 18," he explains.

Naturally, Don is the course champ. "I hold the course record," he

Backyard Golf

When planning his retirement, Don Payne turned to his childhood.

Don Payne figures he could take Tiger Woods if he and the golfing great competed at Payne Da Lowe Sa Greens. That's the play-on-Ponderosa name he and his wife, the former Mary Lou Lowe, gave to their backyard miniature golf course in Jacksboro.

He began designing the six-hole course about a year and a half before he retired from the La Follette Post Office. "I just got this idea one day to build my own golf course," says Don, who worked in the postal service for more than two decades. "When I was about 10 years old, I got my first job working at a mini golf course. I started out at 50 cents an hour. I thought I was a rich little kid."

Lawn Logistics

With no background in landscape design, Don first mapped his course with a lawn mower. "I had some land

Don and wife Mary Lou putt together occasionally, but "mostly, the little kids from the neighborhood like to play," Don says.

behind my house that wasn't good for much," he says. Tiller work followed the mowed outline. Don built the frames himself. Next came guys with concrete and carpet to add playable putting surfaces.

The individual structures are "a lot bigger than what you normally see on a putt-putt course," he explains. Green sizes vary, some 9 x 9 feet, others 9 x 6

says. "It's a par 21, and I've done it in 11 strokes on three different occasions." He's also made a hole in one on all the holes at least once, even tricky No. 5, the hardest hole on the course. "I've only done that one time," he admits. "Nobody else has ever done it."

Beat that, Tiger.

NANCY DORMAN-HICKSON

