

review: **Links Pro**

by Tuncer Deniz

Type: Golf Simulation

Publisher: Access (800/800-4880)

Retail Price: \$69.95

Street Price: \$46.00

Requires: 13" 256 color monitor, 4 MB RAM, System 6.0.7 or later

Protection: None

The success of any simulation depends largely on how well it simulates a real-life object, activity, etc. After all, the words "game simulation" mean a game is trying to simulate something from the "real world" (not to be confused with MTV's *The Real World*). For example, a flight simulator tries to simulate a plane, while a golf simulation tries to simulate. . . you guessed it, golf.

Over the years golf games like Jack Nicklaus' *Unlimited Golf*, *MacGolf*, and *PGA Tour* have come and gone but Access' *Links Pro* latest entry into this heavily contested golf game market is likely to become a favorite for years to come. Ported to the Mac by Mark Adams, its superb graphics, attention to detail, and accurate gameplay make *Links* the best golf game in the market today.

Loading the Golf Cart. Before you start a round of *Links*, you have an array of options before you. After launching the application, you can decide who you will play, which course, whether you want to play 18 or 9 holes, which clubs to use, which tees to hit from, and what rules you will want to follow (for example, no mulligans). The game even lets you choose your gender, skill level, shirt color, and whether to have a caddy who recommends a club for you before each shot.

Other options also allow you to configure the game's graphics to match the speed of your computer. A *Window Layout* screen gives you eight different viewing windows to choose from and you can have a maximum of 4 viewing windows on the screen at the same time. In addition to the *Main View*, you can choose the *Green view* (view from behind the green), *Top View* (bird's eye view of the course), *Set Up* (change the swing plane, stance, etc.), *Club Distance* (chart showing average distance of each club), *Score Card*, *Profile* (cross section of

the course), and Blank (nada, white space).

Links Pro comes with one course, Harbour Town Golf Links. Other courses like Firestone, Bountiful, and the recently released Big Horn are available through Access and other distributors at a very reasonable price. In the future, Access will be releasing new courses about every 2-3 months.

ee Off! The first thing you'll notice when you begin a game of Links are the amazing terrain-texturing graphics. Each hole on every golf course available for Links is accurately modeled after the real thing. All the objects including fairways, trees, roughs, sand, water, golf carts, and even deer and cows are realistically simulated giving you a breathtaking view to hit from on every single shot. The screen takes a few seconds (more than a few on slower Macs) to draw the graphics and you're set to tee-off.

A control panel at the bottom of the screen allows you to set up your shots, and gives you important information about the status of the current game including distance to the hole, wind, lie, current score, etc.

After choosing a club, you move your mouse pointer over the main view screen and hold the mouse button down. A small flagpole appears as you hold the mouse button which allows you to aim to where you want the ball to go. After setting up the shot, you use the Swing button to hit the ball. This, of course, is the hard part. In order for the ball to go toward the hole, you have to make sure the power level of the swing comes as close to the 12 o'clock mark at the top of the Swing button. After releasing the mouse button on top, you have to click on the 6 o'clock marker at the bottom on dead center in order to make it go straight. If you click before or after the marker at the bottom, you will either slice or hook the shot. The severeness of the slice or hook depends on how much power you hit the ball with.

The difference between a great Links player and an average players depends on how well you can control your swing. This, of course, can take some time and depends on how much you practice you get in. Some Links players have gotten so good at the game that they shoot under 60 regularly!

An Eightsome. One of Links' strongest features is network play. Up to eight players can link up together and play over an AppleTalk, Ethernet, or Apple Talk Remote Access network. Net play really gives Links another new dimension by adding the human element of competition into the game. The thrill of competing against another human opponent is what really makes Links the complete golf game.

If you don't have access to a network or ARA, Links allows you to trade recorded players with others who play Links. For example, a friend of yours can record a game he or she played and then mail or e-mail you the recorded game. You can then play against friend's previously recorded game. If you have no Links friends, the game comes with an assortment of recorded players to play against.

Be the Ball. In addition to running on 680x0 Macs, Links runs in native mode on PowerMacs and is wickedly fast. In fact, it is so fast, a typical 18 hole game can usually take about a half hour (if you know what you're doing). Links also allows you to "preload" some of its graphics into RAM (if you have enough of it) to make redraws faster.

The game also supports voice recognition if you have A/V capabilities on your Mac. You can select clubs and shot types (draws, fades, etc.) by using your Mac's microphone.

Some of Links' other outstanding features include realistic sound effects, statistics for each player and game, statistics for each championship course, and a saved shot feature that lets you save and replay your best shots from forward or reverse views.

[t's in the Hole!](#) Links Pro for the Macintosh is nearly perfect. About the only thing I didn't like about the game was that the ball would sometimes roll off some 30-40 feet on some sloped greens. In my opinion, a little bit too excessive. I mean, where did the gravity disappear to on those greens?

That minor little annoyance aside, I'd say Links is the undisputed champ of all golf games. Nothing can come close to its visually stunning graphics, fun gameplay, and horde of wonderful features. Links is truly in a league of its own. But don't take my word for it, try the demo out for yourself (click on the Demo button below) and experience something from out of this world.

Pros

- Amazing graphics
- Network play
- No Bugs
- Features galore
- It's fun!

Cons

- Ball tends to roll too far on some greens
- Game comes with only one course